OLD!

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

RETRO GAMER

AMSTRAD | COMMODORE | SEGA | NINTENDO | ATARI | SINCLAIR | NEO-GEO | SONY | COIN-OP | MOBILE

2,000 PROFILES NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE AT RETROGAMER.NET

THE BIG FEATURE
BEYOND SOFTWARE
BEHIND THE DOORS OF THE 8-BIT ADVENTURE HOUSE





• BEHIND THE LAST •
NINJA
• SYSTEM 3'S JOHN TWIDDY ON CREATING AN 8-BIT MASTERPIECE •

RETROINSPECTION
VIRTUAL BOY
PROOF THAT NOT ALL NINTENDO CONSOLES HAVE THE MIDAS TOUCH

THE MAKING OF
DANDY
THE 8-BIT ATARI GAME THAT INSPIRED ED LOGG'S GAUNTLET

FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE OF RETRO GAMER

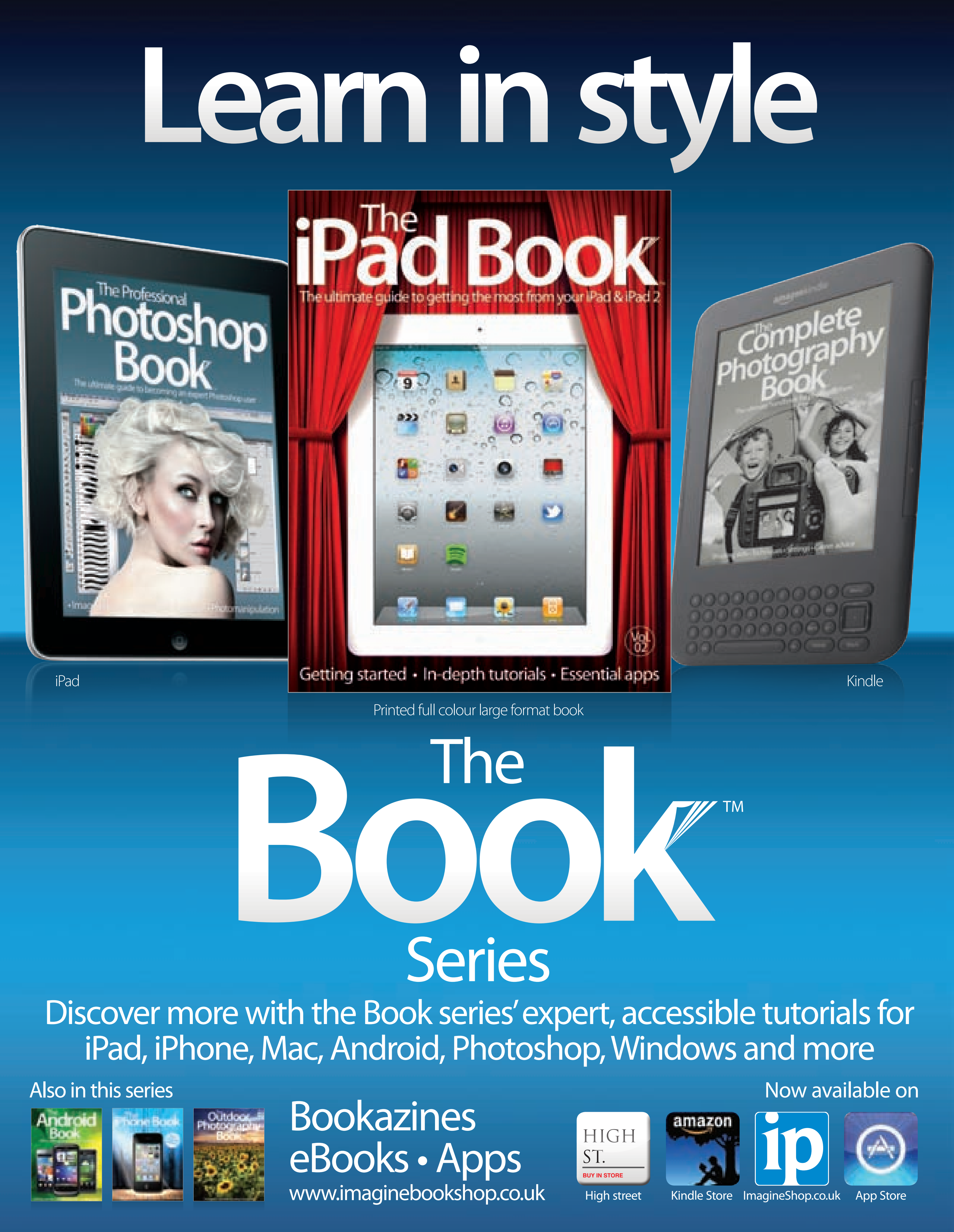
KWAK DISCOVER WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU CROSS A CUTE DUCK WITH BUBBLE BOBBLE

SHINOBI YOUR INDISPENSABLE GUIDE TO SEGA'S SIDE-SCROLLING NINJA FRANCHISE

IAIN LEE THUMB BANDITS PRESENTER JOINS US WITH A NEW COLUMN

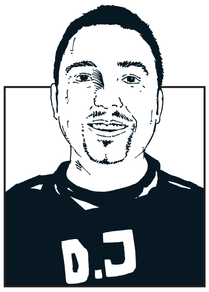
TET-TWIST TEN VARIATIONS ON THE CLASSIC PUZZLER THAT YOU'VE NOT PLAYED

ISSUE 64 £4.99 NOW Gamer.com
IMAGINE PUBLISHING
RETRO GAMER* LOAD 64


Learn in style
The Professional Photoshop Book
The iPad Book
The ultimate guide to getting the most from your iPad & iPad 2
Vol 02
Getting started • In-depth tutorials • Essential apps
The Complete Photography Book
iPad
Kindle
Printed full colour large format book
The Book™ Series
Discover more with the Book series' expert, accessible tutorials for iPad, iPhone, Mac, Android, Photoshop, Windows and more
Also in this series
Android Book
Outdoor Photography Book
Bookazines
eBooks • Apps
www.imaginebookshop.co.uk
Now available on
HIGH ST.
BUY IN STORE
High street
amazon
Kindle Store
ip
ImagineShop.co.uk
App Store

THE RETROBATES

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE NINJA GAME?



DARRAN JONES

Oh come on, do I really have to spell it out for everyone now? It's *Strider* of course; the best, most acrobatic ninja master you ever did see.
Expertise: Juggling a wife, two children and Retro Gamer
Currently playing:
OutRun Online Arcade
Favourite game of all time:
Robotron: 2084



ASHLEY DAY

Any of the *Mystical Ninja* games. They've got a great sense of humour – mostly thanks to roller-skating giant robots – and they play really well too.
Expertise: The games of Team17, MSX, Sega's *Shining Force* series
Currently playing:
Valkyria Chronicles
Favourite game of all time:
Shining Force III



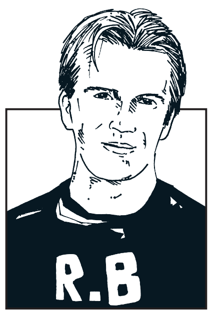
STUART HUNT

Well, it can only be *Shinobi*, the greatest ninja series of them all, and one of my favourite arcade games of all time.
Expertise:
Games with flying bits in them
Currently playing:
Street Fighter IV
Favourite game of all time:
Street Fighter IV



CRAIG GRANNELL

That would be *Bruce Lee*, or *Samurai Warrior* (*Usagi Yojimbo*) if animal ninjas are allowed. Favourite when playing a ninja… er, pass.
Expertise:
Games you don't need 37 fingers to control
Currently playing:
Real-life Hover Bovver
Favourite game of all time:
H.E.R.O.



RICHARD BURTON

It has to be *The Last Ninja*. Great graphics, atmospheric game, top-drawer music, you just can't fault it. A seminal game for the C64 and one of the best released on it.
Expertise: Stuff, nonsense, things and stuff
Currently playing:
Baby chocolate fountain simulator
Favourite game of all time:
Manic Miner



PAUL DRURY

Kat and Ana's levels in *WarioWare, Inc* and the micro-ninja wit of *N+*. Small is beautiful.
Expertise: The hanky code
Currently playing:
Moons Of Jupiter
Favourite game of all time:
Sheep In Space



IAIN LEE

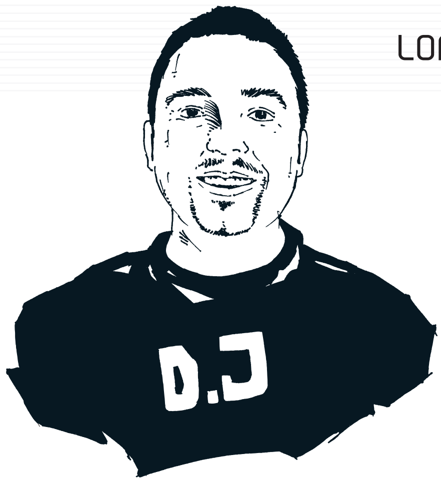
Easily *The Last Ninja* on the BBC. I was awful at it though; even now, with a full walk-through, I can't get very far at all.
Expertise: Pretending to be American whilst playing on Xbox Live
Currently playing:
Halo Wars – as an American
Favourite game of all time:
Elite, the BBC Model B version. Please bring out an online version (and don't tell me it's called *EVE*)



PAUL DAVIES

I'll go for *Super Shinobi* on the Mega Drive. I kind of fancied those girls with the split dresses, but was punished for my dark thoughts by that impossible jump on the harbour stage.
Expertise: Banging my head against brick walls
Currently playing:
Garou: Mark Of The Wolves, *R-Types*, *Street Fighter IV*
Favourite game of all time:
Ghouls 'N Ghosts

LOADING...



We're nearly there everyone. It's taken several months of hard work and a lot of helpful feedback, but we're finally getting closer to the newer, sleeker Retro Gamer. This month we've redesigned the front end of the magazine, given you insight into industry veterans, new spins on old Live Publishing content and more in-depth stories that you, the reader can participate in by visiting our online forums (www.retrogamer.net/forum).

We also happen to have a couple of new columnists this month in the form of Paul Davies (ex-editor of *C&VG*) and Iain Lee, who you may remember from the likes of *The 11 O'Clock Show* and *Thumb Bandits*. Then there's the fact that we've started twittering like insane fools (you can get all the latest updates at http://twitter.com/RetroGamer_Daz).

All this and we've still managed to fill the magazine with an amazing array of entertaining content. We'll see you in a month's time when we'll be unveiling a new community feature that all readers can participate in. Head on over to http://retrogamer.net/forum/viewtopic.php?f=17&t=14473 for more information.

Enjoy the magazine





CONTENTS



» **Load 64** Breathing new life into classic games

FEATURED

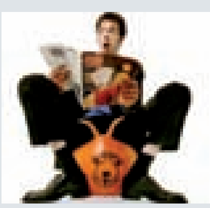


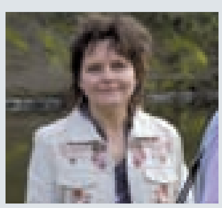
RETRO REVIVALS

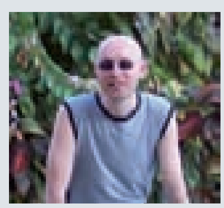




This month we've been chatting to...







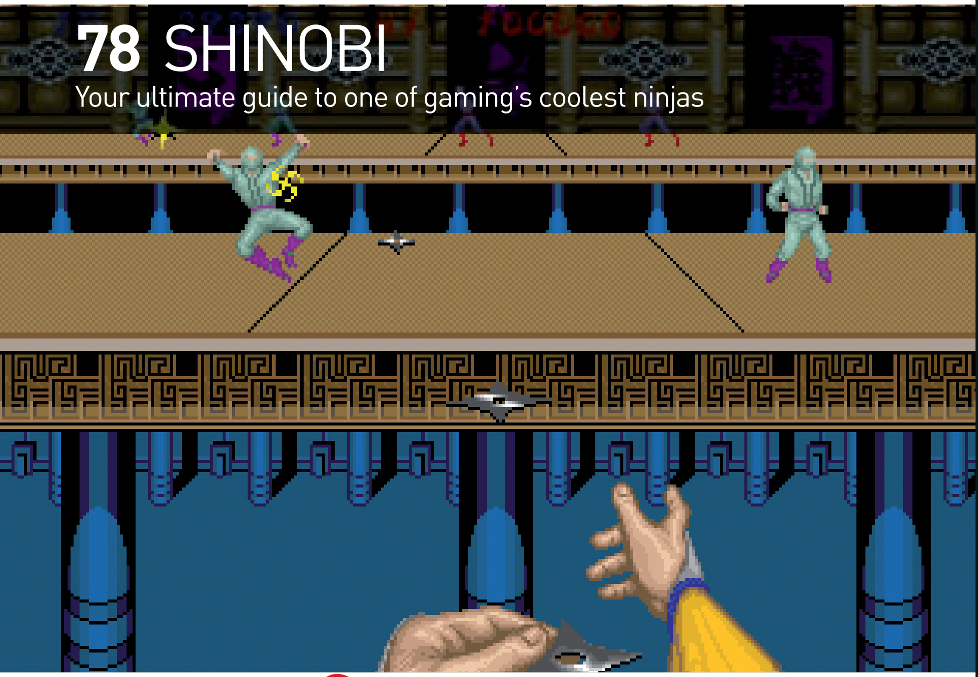
"Marks a glorious apex for the developer"

Stuart Hunt



48 THE CLASSIC GAME

Find out why *Garou: Mark Of The Wolves* is one of the best beat-'em-ups of all time



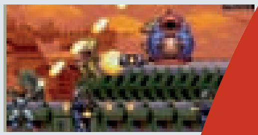
78 SHINOBI

Your ultimate guide to one of gaming's coolest ninjas

retro GAMER.net READER'S REVIVAL







24 ALIEN SOLDIER

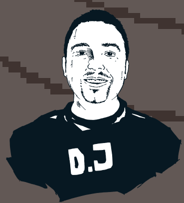
Scott Read loves Treasure's hardcore blaster and it's not because it has naughty-looking things in it either.

ESSENTIALS

RETRO RATED

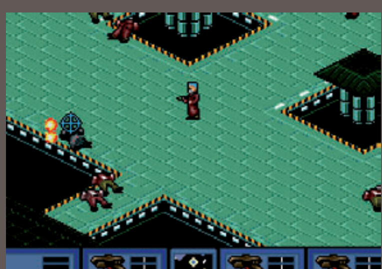
retro radar

» GIVE US TWO MINUTES AND WE'LL GIVE YOU THE RETRO WORLD



» Greetings and welcome to a brand new Retro Radar where you can get our own fresh take on the world of retro. This month we look at Byte Back, introduce our two new columnists and reveal the new retro gaming exhibition we're sponsoring. Good times.

* CONTENTS



» What could be better than a weekend of playing classic videogames and meeting Stormtroopers?



* GO DEEPER

» Organiser Mat Corne originally had the idea for Byte Back after attending last year's excellent Retro Fusion event.

» Byte Back had a host of classic programmers attend, including Jon Hare, Jonathan 'Joffa' Smith and Jim Bagley.

» Retro Gamer's resident Desert Island Disks writer, Paul Drury was also there and interviewed high-score legends Jon 'Pac-Man' Stoodley and Tony 'Missile Command' Temple.

BYTE BACK 2009

RETRO GAMER REPORTS ON MAT CORNE'S DEBUT RETRO EVENT

The doors of Bidds nightclub burst open at 11am on the Saturday to reveal a squad of Stormtroopers welcoming gamers to the event.

Picking up a name badge and programme from the lobby, we were eager to enjoy a weekend of classic gaming, along with the opportunity to chat to a few legends from the past. First off though, there were two rooms to explore. The first had stalls selling games and hardware, and a wide range of machines from the Atari 2600 to PlayStation 3. The second room was dedicated to homebrew, with RGCD, Superior Software and Binary Zone among the exhibitors. Bob Wakelin, the former Ocean cover artist, was selling prints of his artwork. In this second room was the stage, home to the Q&A sessions throughout Saturday.

Events kicked off with Jamie Woodhouse, discussing his Amiga platform classic *Qwak*. The Ocean Reunited panel had four famous names. Technical gremlins were followed by the dramatic entrance of Spectrum programmer Joffa Smiff who, after taking measures to counter his nerves, tripped onto the stage and was helped to a seat. He contributed a few comments to what followed, urging Simon Butler not to "name names" during one particular rant.

> "Simon Butler was the most vocal, giving his views on what had happened at Ocean"

"Pixel-pusher for hire" Simon Butler was the most vocal, giving his views on what had happened at Ocean: "Britain [had] the greatest software industry in Europe, and Ocean were the greatest company." The story of *Total Recall*'s troubled outside development and rapid reprogramming in-house was followed with tales of sleeping under his desk, the Quaker graveyard under the car park and an interesting observation on modern games – "*Gears Of War* is *Green Beret*. Or *Commando*". Ocean sacked Butler and he now works freelance, having been involved in over 200 games in his career. Butler admitted he left Ocean under a cloud, being seen as a "whistle-blower" by the "monkeys in suits".

Spectrum artist Mark R Jones declared his pride in his loading screens, and lamented how much of his graphic work was cut out of projects. He recalled how he got the job, travelling down to Manchester on the train with his mum. "It was an easy



Developers' opinion

» What the developers thought about Byte Back 2009



Simon Butler

Byte Back, while so obviously a DIY event, was unlike anything I'd encountered. It was filled with people who genuinely loved games and weren't blasé or flippant about what was a passion for them. It was quite refreshing after becoming jaded from one too many slick shows with the bigwigs peddling their wares.

There were a few hiccups with the Q&A, but it seemed to go as well as could be expected under the rather unforeseen circumstances. The audience questions were for the most part incisive and engaging. The events regarding Joffa Smiff are now water under the bridge.

I would have no hesitation of appearing at something similar in the future. It was for the most part, enjoyable and entertaining.



Jim Bagley

I thought the event was fantastic, filled with lots of retro goodness for every retro fan, a big thumbs-up to Mat Corne for organising the event. I managed to find and buy *Hudson Hawk* for the GBA, one of the few games that I was never given gratis just after making it

Joffa has some personal issues he's going through at the moment. Personally I think he was brave yet wrong to have gone to such extremes to confront his biggest fear just to be there for his fans, considering he is sociophobic, and the worst thing they can do is go into a crowd, let alone a crowd of people there to see him and ask him questions.

I would go to another event like this in the future; it was worth the visit.



Jon Hare

I thought the event was very enjoyable and well organised. It would have been nice to see some provision for live music as it was a live music venue (I did bring my guitar just in case).

I really enjoyed the Q&A session. Particularly because it was possible to spend time going through some areas of Sensible's history that are usually just glossed over. It was also nice to speak with such an attentive and knowledgeable group of people.

I signed the usual boxes, CDs, posters and T-shirts. It is fun for me; I do not get this kind of recognition in everyday life. Usually it is a novelty that happens to me once or twice a year.

I have every intention to continue to attend these events as long as I can find the time.



» Stormtroopers play the *Star Wars* arcade game. No wonder the Death Star blew up…



» Any event that allows you to play hardcore shmups is always going to go down well with us.



interview, and a mad place to work." Bored with finishing early on projects, Jones admitted he "annoyed" other people at Ocean but is now back in the industry working as a freelance artist.

Jim Bagley worked for Ocean subsidiary Special FX, coding titles on Spectrum and Amstrad that were "the rubbish the in-house team didn't want". The entire panel agreed with his statement, "How do you make a movie into a game?", and of long hours fuelled by coffee, Coca-Cola and chocolate. Jim's funniest story concerned travelling to duplicators Ablex to fix bugs in *Cabal*, then sharing a hotel bridal suite with artist Ivan Davies. His remedy to bring back the golden years of the games industry? "Get rid of middle management!"

The fallout from the session (and Smiff's behaviour) reached the World Of Spectrum and Ocean Experience forums after Jones had posted video footage on YouTube, with Smiff declaring, "I'm sorry if I've upset people. That was NEVER my aim." Smiff declined to be interviewed for this piece.

Next up on stage was Jon Hare, bringing with him some fascinating design documents to show, including map layouts from *Mega-lo-Mania*. Hare described how *Parallax* launched Sensible so successfully, the bizarre ending of *Wizkid* and the sex scenes in unreleased epic *Sex 'n' Drugs & Rock 'n' Roll*. The last session was High Score Heroes, chaired by Paul Drury. Jon Stoodley discussed his history with *Pac-Man*, and demonstrated tactics including the "sit spot". Tony Temple talked about *Missile Command*, his dealings with "Mr Awesome" Roy Shildt and entering rude words on the *Moon Cresta* high-score table.

Gaming continued till midnight, but most were back at 11am on Sunday. The charity auction featured many great lots, including a *Wizball* art print signed by Hare, Jones and Wakelin. Organiser Mat Corne tells us, "There were a few glitches and things that didn't go exactly to plan, but overall it was a fantastic occasion. Meeting Jon Hare was a real honour as *Wizball* is my all-time favourite home computer game. But most of all I loved meeting dozens of friendly, like-minded people who were all there to have fun playing their favourite old games." The event supported local children's hospice The Donna Louise Trust and the RSPCA: "Nearly £2,400 was raised, so thanks to everyone that came along and made the event such a success." *

THE RETRO DEBATE

» What did you think about Mat's debut retro event?

VISIT **RETROGAMER.NET/FORUM** TO HAVE YOUR SAY

ID: SirClive

Byte Back was superb. So good in fact I decided to give it a go and put on the next show myself! The highlight for me, as always, is meeting up with the people from the various retro forums.

ID: Antiriad2097

Byte Back has been the highlight of my gaming year. My first event and I couldn't have felt more at home. Disappointments? Being outbid on the chance to set fire to some Amstrad games at the charity auction. Missing the Jon Hare session.

ID: Woody.cool

Byte Back surpassed my expectations. I met all the familiar faces, and a few new ones. I went home with more than I left with. For me, the negatives were the food (including waiting time) and the fact that the second room was a tad cold!

ID: Mohicankid

Byte Back was a great two days, it's good to be able to have a drink with people you chat to on a daily basis and find out how different they are to what you imagined! I was wearing my wrestling mask for ten minutes without anyone noticing! Lows… No major ones really, just poor toilets and an overworked chef!

ID: Rinoa

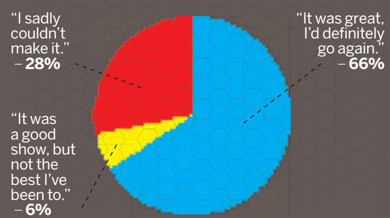
I absolutely loved Byte Back! Had a great time playing games with new people, entering some competitions, seeing systems I'd never come across before, having a great choice of retro gear to buy from both the traders and homebrew sections, winning in the raffle, seeing the Stormtroopers and playing the *Star Wars* cab. My only disappointment of the weekend was missing the Q&As. Time just flew by.

ID: Zetr0

I still struggle to put that weekend into words. I was absolutely blessed and right at home in my element, both in the main hall with all the computers and arcade cabs as well as the VIP lounge surrounded by Beebs / C64s and the Acorn ilk! I missed the Ocean Reunited bit, but I caught that on YouTube!

FORUM OPINION

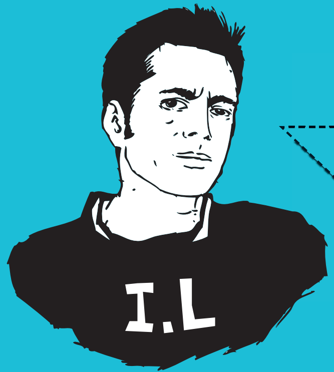
How Was Byte Back?



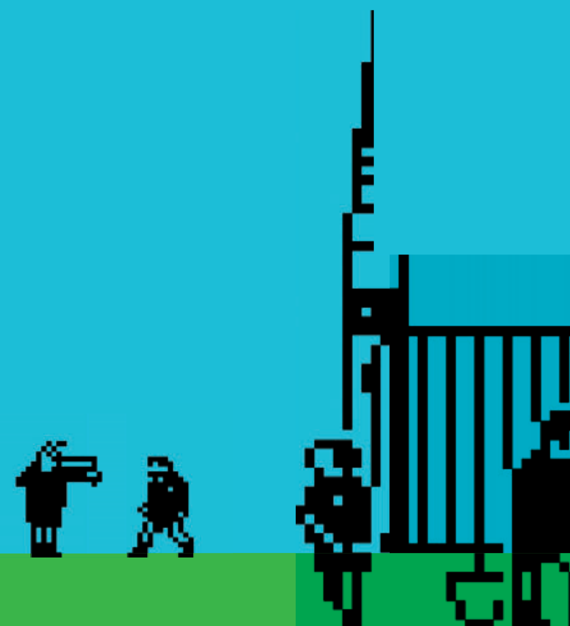
retro columns

» RETRO RECOLLECTIONS WITH CELEB IAIN LEE

Here's my bio...
Iain Lee has been a fervent gamer since he was tiny. And that was a long time ago. In between playing computer games and collecting crap from eBay, he has presented Channel 4's *The 11 O'Clock Show*, *Rise*, and currently does bits of stand-up as well as presenting the *Sunday Night* show on Absolute Radio at 10pm.



Hi there, my name's **Iain Lee**. You might remember me from Thumb Bandits, The 11 O'Clock Show and Absolute Radio, but now I'm here to confess my love for retro



Playground Wars

Hello Retro Gamers, Iain Lee here. I hope you don't mind me butting in like this, but you all seem to be having so much fun that I thought I would join in myself.

Although, if I am completely honest, I am a little nervous about opening my mouth in front of such esteemed company. You see, my connection with old computer games has never been a smooth or easy ride. From an early age, the machines I had thrust upon me by my parents, who didn't really know what they were doing, always seemed to attract the wrong sort of attention from my friends. Laughter, abuse and even downright physical bullying was pretty normal for me in the early Eighties, for two reasons. The first is because I owned a Betamax video recorder. Of course, it was much better quality than VHS, but when the only film you can rent is *Heaven Can Wait*, while everybody else is swapping hooky copies of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, your social standing takes a bit of a battering.

However, that pales into insignificance compared to the hammering my body took thanks to my first two computer systems. Number 1 – the Dragon 32. Now, I will defend this yellowish, odd-shaped box with what felt like a 1950s typewriter keyboard until the day I die. It's a fantastic machine. Yes, to get anything approaching hi-res graphics it had to do them in black and white, and the majority of the games were pretty poor, but for a nine-year-old kid it was just fantastic. Well, for this nine-year-old kid. For every other nine-year old kid it was apparently a hunk of junk.

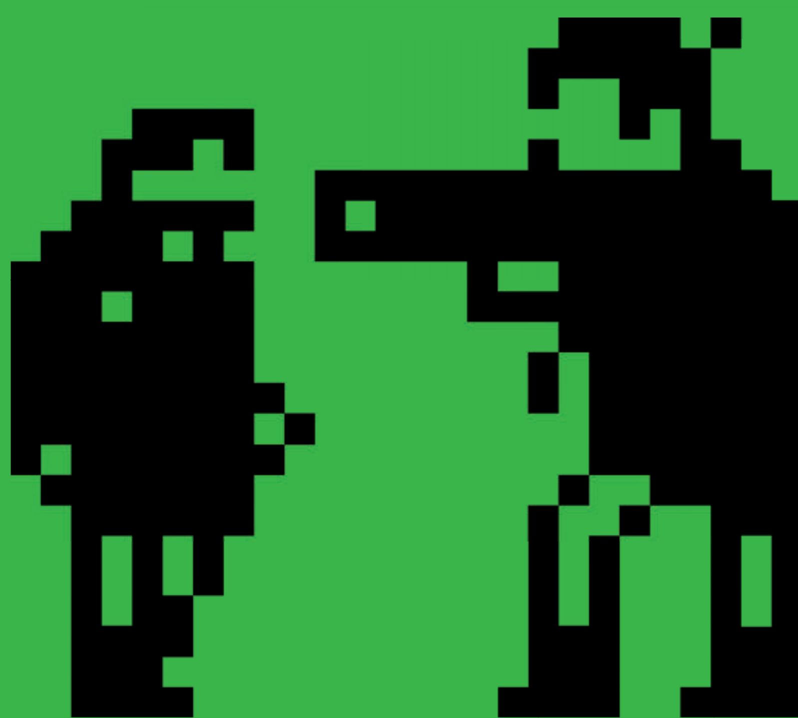
However much I loved the Dragon, I was excited when my family decided the time had come to upgrade to something a little more modern a few years later. Finally I was going to get the new computer that would seal my fate as a cool kid, one of the in crowd, I was going to be popular! We all trundled down to Rumbelows in Maidenhead one cold, dark, November evening. This was it. I was going to get the Commodore 64 I had been destined to own. The graphics, the games, the kudos! But hang on. No mum, that's not a C64, that's a bloody BBC Micro. Yes, a model B, but still, that's what they have in my school. I am NEVER going to live this down.

My mother was sucked in by the 'it's educational' nonsense that every TV shop or newsagent that sold computers in the 1980s had read somewhere. My fate was sealed. For the rest of my time at Claycots Middle School and beyond, I was going to be a nerdy bum-licking geek.

So that's why I'm a little shy to speak here. Am I still going to get the abuse I received 25 years ago? I pray not. Hopefully in the pages of **Retro Gamer** I can find some kindred spirits, others who suffered because the machine they had as a child was perhaps not the coolest. Although to be honest, I'll probably just get a load of letters calling me knob. Some things never change.



Laughter, abuse and even downright physical bullying was pretty normal for me



What was your earliest gaming memory? Playing *Popeye* in some tiny, smoke-filled room while on holiday in Spain. I was just nine at the time.





CLASSIC REVIEWER



BIO

Name: Nick Roberts
First Magazine: Crash
Role: Staff Writer
Favourite Game: Dizzy
Favourite System: ZX Spectrum

■ Best press trip you've been on

Without doubt a trip with Orange mobile to the Nürburgring in Germany. First-class travel, five-star hotel, helicopters into the race track, walk around the pits, the finest food and a bill-free mobile for a year. All for a short column about their mobile games. Ahh, those were the days…

■ The best magazine you've worked on

While I have fond memories of *Crash*, I'd say the most fun I've had would be on *N-Force* in the '90s. The Super Nintendo had just launched, we all got our first Mac Classics and putting a magazine together where you could take snapshots of games, create maps and have fun with sprites was a blast!

■ The magazine you'd like to have worked on

I always had a great admiration for *Arcade*. That issue one Lara Croft cover was excellent!

■ Best person you've met within the industry

I think I'll go for Lorne Lanning of Oddworld Inhabitants. Met him at their offices in California for the launch of the Xbox *Oddworld* (they give all the programmers vitamins each day you know!). He loved our cover so much he sent me a Harrods hamper!

■ How have magazines changed since you've started on them?

The internet has changed magazines forever. Not only in terms of sales, but in terms of the atmosphere in magazine teams. When there was downtime back in the '80s we would play Spectrum game challenges. Now people check their Twitter account.

■ A short amusing anecdote you can remember

Live '93 show in London's Olympia. We were running *Mortal Kombat* Mega Drive challenges live on stage when a granny calls me over to complain about the amount of blood and guts in the game and her comments go out live over the mike!



» [SNES] We'll be very surprised if Starbreeze's update ends up looking like this.

LET'S GO TO WAR

NEW SYNDICATE GAME ON THE WAY

It's been rumoured for a very long time now, but it seems a new version of *Syndicate* is definitely on the way. EA announced some time back that it'd be working with Starbreeze Studios on a re-imagining of a classic franchise called 'Project Redlime', but nothing further was revealed. Well, that was until recent announcements confirming that Starbreeze would indeed be working on a sequel to the cult sci-fi classic – although it's worth noting that neither Starbreeze or Electronic Arts have made any official announcement yet.

The *Syndicate* franchise has been dormant for quite a while now, with the last game, *Syndicate Wars*, being released by Bullfrog back in 1996. The PlayStation version has been available on the PS3's online store for some time now, so you could argue that EA is maybe testing the water and seeing how much interest there would be in a new game.

While there's certainly been a lot of buzz about the new title, many gamers are concerned that Starbreeze might not necessarily be the right team for the job. While there's no denying that the visual style of past projects like *The Chronicles Of Riddick: Escape From Butcher Bay* and *The Darkness* lends itself perfectly to *Syndicate*'s cyberpunk-style setting, most feel that the Swedish-based company will have bitten off more than it can chew – especially when you consider that it is also working on a new Bourne game for EA. Fingers crossed, then. *

FORUM OPINION

VISIT RETROGAMER.NET/FORUM TO HAVE YOUR SAY

What will new game be like?



"It'll probably have the same isometric viewpoint of the original with stunning 2D sprites." – 45%

"It's going to be another generic FPS with lame squad mechanics." – 30%

"It'll be in the third-person and will feature a really poor camera." – 15%

"What's *Syndicate*?" – 10%

"I hope that they follow the path used in *Dawn of War 2*, a squad based RPG-RTS would be perfect for *Syndicate* I think."
– moominpapa

"I think I would be excited had I not recently replayed the original *Syndicate* and discovered thebroken team A.I. I happily ignored in the past. There's nothing worse than when your carefully worked out strategy goes to pot because of the stupid A.I."
– Oh not again!

MICRO BYTES

Snippets of news from the exciting world of retro



» Vandal Hearts Returns

A sequel to *Vandal Hearts* is heading to PSN and Live Arcade later this year. Boasting brand new presentation and plenty of new play mechanics, the only thing currently putting us off *Flame Of Judgement* is its bizarre-looking character models. Still, it's very early days and while we'd have been perfectly happy with the PlayStation original, we're excited to see what Konami will cook up for this sequel.



» Reeves leaves Sony

David Reeves – whose list of titles include president, CEO and co-COO of Sony Computer Entertainment Europe – is stepping down from the company after 14 successful years. "I am going to spend my time now trying to repay society for all I have taken from it," he recently revealed in a press statement. We're not sure exactly what he's supposed to have taken, but wish him all the best for his future endeavours.



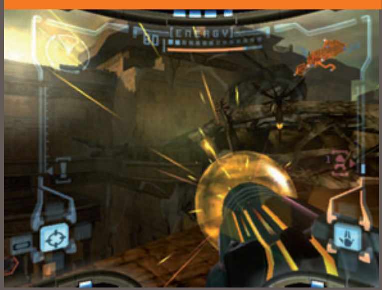
» Jackson vindicated

You may have remembered us recently reporting that Michael Jackson's complete collection of arcade games (along with many other items from his Neverland ranch) would be going under the hammer. Sadly – although not for Michael obviously – Jackson's lawyers have put a stop to it, so those hoping to get their hands on his six-player *X-Men* arcade cabinet are going to be very disappointed.

retroradar

» GIVE US TWO MINUTES AND WE'LL GIVE YOU THE RETRO WORLD

MICRO BYTES
Snippets of news from the exciting world of retro



» Samus goes for a Wii

It's been announced for a while now, but we've finally seen some trailers of *Metroid Prime* for the Wii. Utilising the same control system that worked so well in *Corruption*, it's getting us very excited. While *Mario Power Tennis* was a bit of a disappointment, *Pikmin* has already proven that old GameCube games can be enhanced for the Wii with some careful planning. Expect a review very soon.



» 8-Bit Book Love

If you enjoyed Andrew Rollings's ZX Spectrum book and Andrew Fisher's love letter to the C64, you'll be looking forward to the final part of their 8-bit trilogy. Boasting a foreword by *Elite* maestro David Braben, *The 8-bit Book – 1981 To 199X* should be available in June and covers 230 games from a variety of well-known and obscure 8-bit machines. Pre-order it now for £17.99 from www.hivebooks.com.



» Minter goes extreme

Fans of Jeff Minter will be pleased to hear that he's teamed up with Taito for the Xbox Live Arcade version of *Space Invaders Extreme*. The llama lover is creating the organic visualiser backgrounds for this update of the ace DS and PSP blaster, so it'll be even trippier than usual. Jeff has been very quiet since *Space Giraffe* didn't do as well as it should have, so it's nice to see him back in the loop.



» Will Wright will be releasing real Sims as soon as the technology is ready.

"Stupid Fun Club will explore new possibilities that are emerging"
WILL WRIGHT ON LEAVING MAXIS

THAT'S NOT WRIGHT

LEGENDARY GAMES CREATOR LEAVES MAXIS

Will Wright has recently left Maxis, some 22 years after he first co-founded the highly successful development studio with Jeff Braun.

Worry not though, for the creative genius behind *Sim Earth*, *Sim City*, *The Sims*, *Spore* and *Raid On Bungeling Bay* has not left the industry entirely – he's simply shifted his attention to a more personal project.

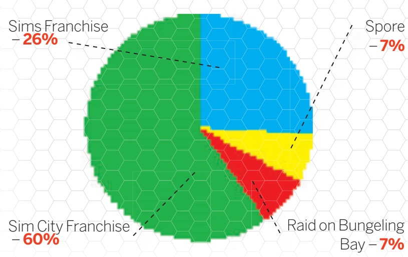
First set up in 2001, Stupid Fun Club is a fully fledged entertainment 'think tank' that will develop new and interesting IP for a variety of media, including videogames, films, toys and the internet. Wright's 12-year period at Electronic Arts (Maxis was bought by the publisher in 1997) isn't the end of their relationship either, as the Redwood-based publisher owns an equal share of the new company with Wright and will also have first refusal on any new videogames he creates.

"The entertainment industry is moving rapidly into an era of revolutionary change," Wright recently revealed. "Stupid Fun Club will explore new possibilities that are emerging from this sublime chaos and create new forms of entertainment on a variety of platforms. In my 12 years at EA, I've had the pleasure to work alongside some of the brightest and most talented game developers in the industry and I look forward to working with them again in the near future."

There's been no mention as to what Stupid Fun Club's first project will be yet, but when you consider that *The Sims 2* and its various expansions have now sold over 100 million units since 2004, you can guarantee that any title Will ends up announcing is going to be watched closely by everyone within the industry. Personally we'd like to see Will branch out and maybe turn his attention to a different genre, but even if he ended up revealing *Sim Bicycle Pump* we'd still probably end up buying it. *

FORUM OPINION
VISIT **RETROGAMER.NET/FORUM** TO HAVE YOUR SAY

Best Will Wright Game



"It doesn't really matter what umbrella he's under, he'll make games that will sell bucketloads."
– smurph

"Never really been a fan of the *Sim* games, so cant really comment too much. I was suprised to see *Raid on Bungelling Bay* listed here though and thoroughly enjoyed it on the C64, so I guess I'm going to have to go with that one. That's what I love about this forum though; it brings up so many fantastic gaming memories."
– Romulous

RETRO-NATION

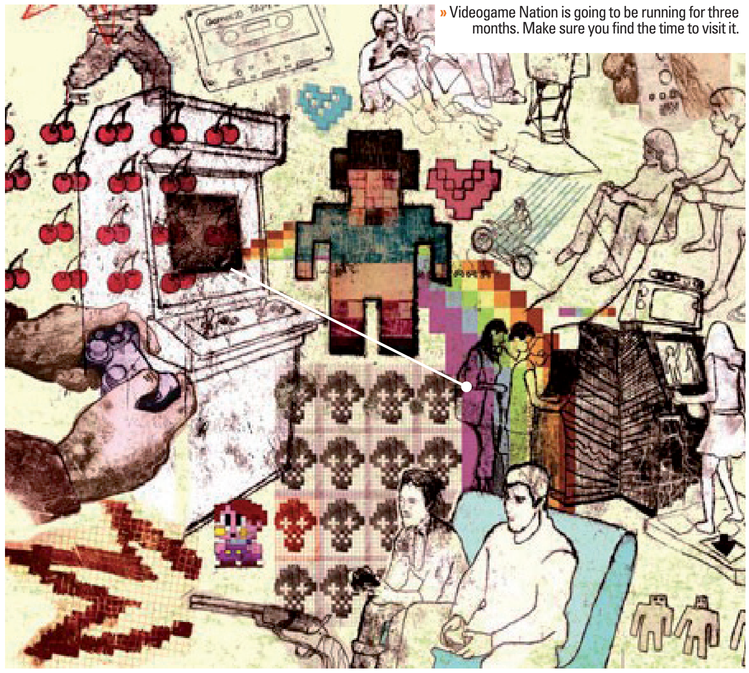
MANCHESTER HOSTS BRAND NEW RETRO EXHIBITION

Our heads have been literally spinning with retro events over the last few months and now there's yet another to add to our rapidly growing list. This time however, you don't need to worry about making a specific week, as the event in question will be running over several months.

Co-sponsored by Imagine Publishing, Videogame Nation will run at Manchester's Urbis Centre from 14 May until 20 September and is dedicated to the UK games industry. The event will cover 40 years of gaming, featuring everything from Matthew Smith's *Manic Miner* to Rockstar North's *Grand Theft Auto IV*. Exclusive interviews with British legends like the Oliver Twins, David Braben and Charles Cecil are all on the cards – visit http://www.urbis.org.uk/page.asp?id=3296 for more up-to-date information – while large sections of the exhibit will cater specifically to classic UK coders such as the Darling brothers, Peter Molyneux, Jon Ritman, Jon Hare and Matthew Smith. There will also be galleries dedicated to the fantastic artwork of Oliver Frey, whose creations have adorned many a Retro Gamer cover.

Needless to say, Videogame Nation's consultant creator, and RG's very own freelancer, David Crookes has high hopes for the event. "Gaming has become a hugely significant part of many people's lives worldwide and this exhibition highlights the contribution British developers have made to the industry and the cultural influence it holds today," he reveals. Crookes is also keen to make people realise just how many big-name games are from the UK, so the likes of *Tomb Raider*, *Grand Theft Auto*, *GoldenEye* and *WipEout* will all feature prominently throughout the show.

Taking a leaf out of Retro Fusion's book, and past retro exhibitions like Game On, Videog ame Nation will also enable visitors to get to grips with a variety of classic consoles and computers, ranging from the ZX Spectrum to current-generation consoles like the PlayStation 3 and Wii. To take the interactivity further, Crookes and Urbis's head of creative programmes, Pollyanna Clayton-Stamm, have also included a bus shelter full of handheld games, an authentic-looking seaside arcade and the ability to play *Sensible World Of Soccer* from a football stadium seat. Maybe we'll see you there. *



» Videogame Nation is going to be running for three months. Make sure you find the time to visit it.

* WHAT WE THINK

Darran

Being proud sponsors of the exhibition, we're greatly looking forward to Videogame Nation. Be sure to look out for me at the event, I'll be the one hanging out in the arcade booth going on about the good old days.

Stuart

Wow, we're certainly being spoilt when it comes to retro events this year! I'm hoping there's going to be a PC Engine GT in the handheld kiosk, so I can relive all those precious memories of the dream that never came to be.

Ashley

Videogames don't get nearly enough attention or respect from the mainstream so it's great to see something like Videogame Nation come to be. And it's in the north too. Finally, something for people who live outside London!

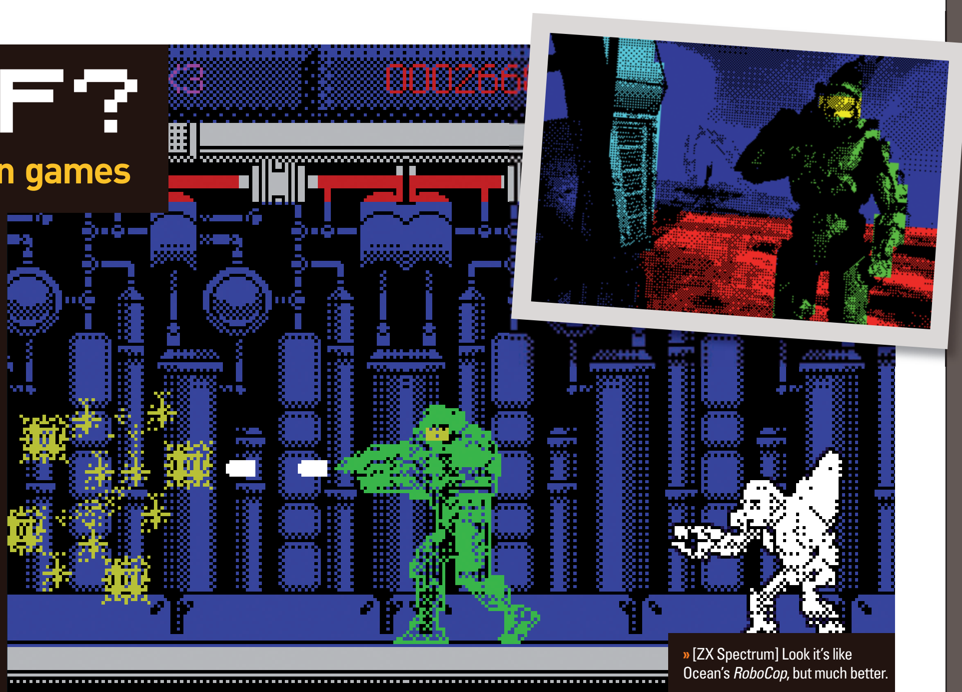


WHAT IF?

Your favourite next-gen games remade, retro style

Subject No.1 **Halo**

IF BUNGIE'S POPULAR Xbox shooter had appeared on the Spectrum, we're pretty confident that it wouldn't have looked like *3D Monster Maze* with a Covenant Elite instead of a T-Rex. No, it would have most likely taken the route of a classic side-scrolling shooter like *Gryzor* or *RoboCop*, with Master Chief blasting everything and anything to pixels as he fought he was through the library (surely the easiest level to replicate on the humble 8-bit?) Oh, and Ocean would publish it. Probably.



» [ZX Spectrum] Look it's like Ocean's *RoboCop*, but much better.

retro columns

» PAUL DAVIES GIVES HIS VIEWS ON THE RETRO WORLD

Here's my bio...
In 1992 I started out on *Mean Machines Sega* and *Nintendo Magazine System*. In 1995 I became editor of *CVG*. I led the *CVG* website from '98 until Christmas 2000, then left journalism to be concept design manager at Criterion Games. I returned to journalism in 2002 and from 2005 I've been running my own company, Unlikely Hero.



Hello retro gamers, my name is **Paul Davies**. I used to be the editor of C&VG and have also worked on a number of classic gaming magazines over the years



Hands On

Real gaming classics never become old, not for me anyway if I'm being reminded of something that has a unique feel. The gizmo in your hands is every bit as important as any abstract images on the screen to experience classic games as they were originally intended. Sometimes the nature of the screen itself plays a part in this too (Vectrex!), but mainly you hold the answer in your hands.

I got to thinking about this recently during my feverish pursuit of a decent joystick to play *Street Fighter IV*. I haven't been this obsessed about a controller since those Twin Sticks for *Virtual On*! I've ended up with a Mad Catz Tournament Edition because nothing else will do. I can now play all my fighting games going back to the original PlayStation days using a top-notch joystick based on a real arcade cabinet.

The six-button *Street Fighter II* setup was stunning in 1991 – a real new challenger! And for my money a radical, or at least very different, interface always signifies a true step forward for games. I remember standing before a *Space Invaders* coin-op and feeling the rumble beneath my feet while being mesmerised by the glare of the recessed screen. That was *Space Invaders*; the magic is lost playing it on a PC. The old Atari VCS version had its own feel too, however, and we have that console to thank for *Night Driver* that used a paddle (a dial) to make it seem sorta realistic.

Back in the arcades, *Tempest* used a dial so that you could make the tiniest of adjustments or spin like a wild man to get out of trouble. *Missile Command* is another experience that arcade-perfect emulation can't match because you're not hurling a trackball around like your life depends on it. We're going to miss all this when the arcades eventually close. This is why I hope console manufacturers will continue to innovate with the hardware interface and not just the software HUD.

It's mainly Nintendo that takes the bravest steps in tactile innovation… and succeeds. The PlayStation Dual Shock is still not a million miles from the original Super NES pad that inspired it – the controller that gave us Mode 7 sky diving in *Pilotwings*. It was only after Nintendo introduced N64 with its analogue stick (something attendees of the November 1995 Shoshinkai show had to be taught to hold properly in order to manoeuvre Mario in a new way) that Sony thought to add not one but two analogue sticks. If we hadn't had *Mario 64* we wouldn't have seen Sega produce *NiGHTS*.

I'm with everyone who's feeling a little bit disenfranchised by Nintendo's current focus on casual gamers, but I will always remember the pure excitement of recognising *Wii Sports* as something that would set the world on fire.

There are many examples that I've missed. But hopefully you'll agree that the brightest future of videogames, as well as our fondest memories of the past, often involves what we do with our 'hands on'.

> It's mainly Nintendo that takes the bravest steps in tactile innovation… and succeeds

What was your first magazine review? The first magazine review I wrote was *Star Trek: 25th Anniversary* for the NES. I thought it was terrible.

Retro Booty

TREASURES FROM THE RETRO DEEP



Super Mario DS Holder

■ **RRP:** £27.99 ■ **Manufacturer:** Popco ■ **Buy it from:** www.play.com

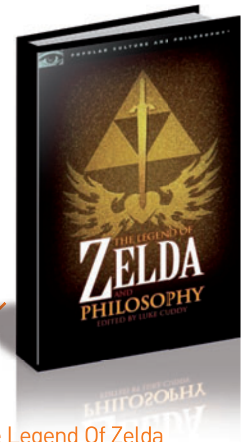
Are you always losing your DS? Need a handy place to keep it? Then why not pick up this rather helpful Mario? Best of all he doesn't talk, so he's not going to say, "It's a me, Mario!" every time you put your DS in his hands.



Eat Me! Ghost

■ **RRP:** £2.95 ■ **Manufacturer:** WG
■ **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk

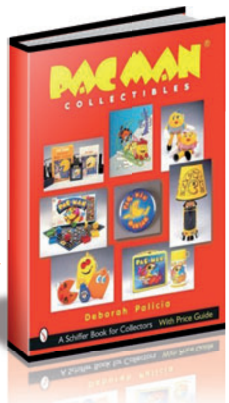
Make a fashion statement, or not, with this funky little key fob. Marvel at how the two words are both a nod to Pac-Man's dot-munching heritage and a suggestive phrase, and be amazed at the little Pac-Men that make up the ghost's eyes.



The Legend Of Zelda Philosophy

■ **RRP:** £10.99 ■ **Publisher:** Open Court ■ **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk

If you fancy some food for thought and love *Zelda* art then why not pick up gorgeous-looking tome? It's certainly heavy-going due to its subject matter, but the excellent *Zelda* art easily justifies it.



Pac-Man Collectibles

■ **RRP:** £29.99
■ **Manufacturer:** Schiffer Publishing
■ **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk

It's been out for quite a while now, but this lush-looking hardback by Deborah Palicia is a must-have if you're a fan of Pac-Man. It covers every type of Pac-Man memorabilia you can think of and a fair few you can't. Essential reading.



Street Fighter Costumes

■ **RRP:** £39.99 - £44.99
■ **Publisher:** Open Court
■ **Buy it from:** www.Escapade.co.uk

If you've got a fancy dress party coming up, or happen to be handy with your fists, then you could do a lot worse than pick up one of these four official costumes. Our favourite is Chun Li's. Can you guess why?



Monopoly: Nintendo Edition

■ **RRP:** £39.99
■ **Publisher:** USAopoly
■ **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk

We've lost count at the number of different versions of *Monopoly* that are now available (we got as far as *Monopoly Star Wars* and *Monopoly Bournemouth*), but this newest edition might well change our minds.



Shoryuken T-Shirt

■ **RRP:** £14.95
■ **Publisher:** Retro GT
■ **Buy it from:** www.retrogt.com

It's seems you can't go anywhere at the moment without seeing Capcom's *Street Fighter IV* plastered on anything and everything. This natty little number even has the button configuration of Ken's Dragon Punch on it. Just in case you forget, like.



Zelda Larga Gachas

■ **RRP:** 35 pence
■ **Publisher:** Tomy
■ **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk

Gachas are all the rage nowadays, so it's hardly surprising that Nintendo have gotten in on the act. Whilst there's a nice *Mario Galaxy* range available – Bee Mario is too cute – it's this adorable *Zelda* range we've had our eyes on.

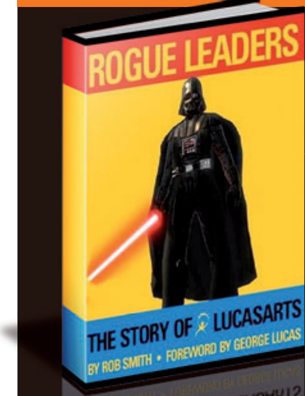


Street Fighter IV Soundtrack

■ **RRP:** £21.66
■ **Publisher:** Sony Music
■ **Buy it from:** www.playasia.com

The music in *SFIV* is amazing, but sadly it's not officially available in the UK. Worry not, as there are plenty of nice importers around, so you'll be able to listen to Zangief's remixed theme as often as you like.

TREASURE OF THE MONTH



Rogue Leaders: The Story of LucasArts

■ **RRP:** £34.99
■ **Publisher:** Titan Books Ltd
■ **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk

From the moment you spy the lenticular cover featuring the likes of Darth Vader, Guybrush Threepwood and a purple tentacle, you know that Rob Smith's 256-page book means business. Featuring a foreword by George Lucas himself, this lavish tome covers every aspect of the gaming process at LucasArts and gives you valuable insight into the studio's many franchises. Not surprisingly, a fair amount of the book is geared towards the *Star Wars* saga. What is surprising, however, is the sheer amount of fantastic, often exclusive, artwork that has been constantly crammed into *Rogue Leaders*. It's filled with breath-taking imagery that will delight both fans of *Star Wars* and LucasArts' games in general. A fascinating, unmissable read.

★ A MOMENT WITH...

Eugene Jarvis

Every issue, we'll be speaking to industry legends. This month we track down Defender and Robotron: 2084 creator, Eugene Jarvis



» Eugene having a quiet day at the Raw Thrills offices.

Who is Eugene Jarvis?

Why, he's the talented programmer who has now been working in the games industry for 30 years. Best known for hardcore arcade blasters like *Defender* and *Robotron: 2084*, he's currently in charge of Raw Thrills Inc whose latest title is the arcade game *Big Buck Safari*.

RG: If readers should play just one of your games, which one and why?
EJ: The arcade version of *Robotron: 2084*. It's so good it will make your brain sweat!

RG: What's your proudest achievement?
EJ: Finally getting laid after decades in the computer lab. Maybe having showers isn't a total waste of time after all. As long as you keep it to once a week or so…

RG: So what's the most difficult thing you've encountered whilst working on a game?
EJ: The hardest is easily the big black blank screen that beckons to you at the beginning of every new project. You have to make life out of the nothingness of outer space and it certainly isn't an easy thing to do.

RG: Which other industry veteran do you must admire and why?
EJ: Will Wright is everyone's favourite game developer and he's mine as well. He is an absolute genius designer and a genius bullshitter, which makes for a killer combo. He is a true visionary. In a parallel universe I could easily see him starting a major religion.

RG: How would you like your games to be remembered?
EJ: Oh that's easy. Something like: "The most action per pixel ever!"

RG: What one game do you wish you had made and why?
EJ: That would definitely be Alex Pajitnov's *Tetris*. The simplicity, refinement, and power of the concept has yet to be matched by any other title. The real beauty of it is that there's no tech needed and it's addictive for life.

RG: What opportunities have making games given you?
EJ: You get into making games because you love playing games, but then you spend so much time making games, and there are so many cool new games out there, that you don't have enough time to play them. It's the unemployed that I truly envy. They can play games 24/7.

RG: What's your darkest moment of being in the games industry?
EJ: Being in the video crash of the Eighties was a pretty grim time. We all thought that games were done and that we'd all have to go out and get proper jobs.



» [Arcade] *Fast And The Furious* is one of Raw Thrills' arcade games.



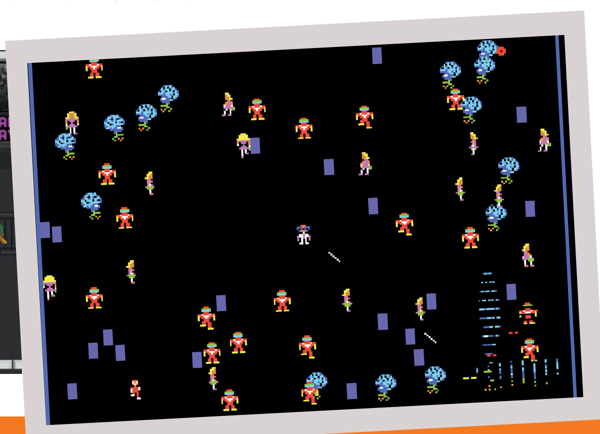
"Robotron: 2084. It's so good your brain will sweat"
EUGENE ON HIS BEST GAME

RG: And your best?
EJ: Being the best player on *Defender* – I was the greatest on earth for the first week of its release. That didn't last very long…

RG: Can you tell us an interesting anecdote about your games career?
EJ: I was once working for Nolan Bushnell on the BOB (brains on board) robot for project NEMO (Never Ever Mention Outside) – oh shit, now I am going to have to kill you.

RG: So how has the industry changed over the last 20 years?
EJ: 20 years ago we saw the start of the evolution to the mega team. Pundits declared the death of the one- or two-man jack-of-all-trades shops, and the rise of minions of craft specialists. Human creativity was crushed by massive producer bureaucracy, thousand-page game implementation specs, and sequels to the nth power. But just as the death of gaming was proclaimed, a whole new independent games movement was born. Games could be fun again. No need for huge budgets and corporate buy-in. Just roll your own! At first the province of small teams of wacko artists, crackpot hackers, and die-hard retro gamers; now a billion-dollar industry fuelled by Xbox Live, Flash and online casual games, and iPhone apps. Surprise: all games don't have to be based on a pre-sold comic-book hero, Spielberg blockbuster, or Tom Clancy scenario clone. Let there be games! ★

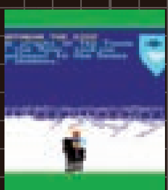




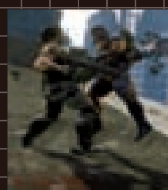
retrodiary

21st May – 18th June

» A month of retro events both past and present



22 May 1984
■ GAME: Beyond Software releases its hugely successful graphic adventure, *The Lords Of Midnight* on the Spectrum.



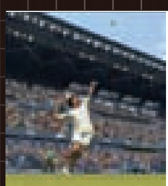
22 May 2009
■ *Bionic Commando* swings onto the PC, PS3 and Xbox 360 courtesy of Capcom.



23 May 2003
■ GAME: PAL GameCube owners find out what the fuss of *Ikaruga* is about when it's finally released in the UK.



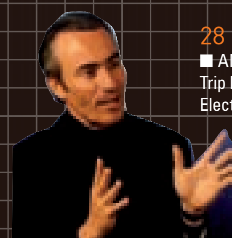
25 May 1991
■ GAME: Palace Software announces the forthcoming release of *Barbarian III* on several 8- and 16-bit formats. It never gets released.



29 May 2009
■ *Virtua Tennis 2009* hits the green thanks to Sega. It's available for PC, PS3 and Xbox 360.



29 May 1984
■ GAME: Mikro-Gen releases its first game featuring Wally Week: the Spectrum platform adventure, *Automania*.



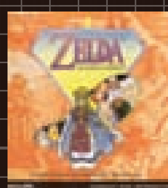
28 May 1982
■ ANNIVERSARY: Trip Hawkins founds Electronic Arts.



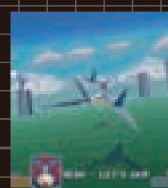
27 May 1982
■ NEWS: Grundy Business Systems releases the £199 NewBrain, to bridge the gap between business and home use. It bombs.

CAPCOM

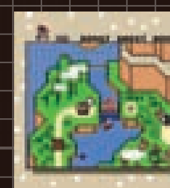
30 May 1979
■ ANNIVERSARY: Japan Capsule Computers is founded. It later renames itself as Capcom.



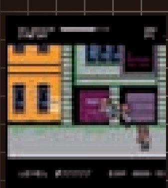
1 June 1991
■ NEWS: Nintendo agrees to let Philips release CDi games featuring Mario and co and the characters of *Zelda*.



3 June 1993
■ GAME: *Starwing* is released on Nintendo's SNES. It's renamed from *StarFox* due to copyright issues.



4 June 1992
■ GAME: *Super Mario World* receives is debut on the SNES, 19 months after the Japanese release.



11 June 1993
■ GAME: *Mighty Final Fight*, a parody of the arcade hit *Final Fight*, arrives on the NES. Bloody good it is too.



10 June 1982
■ GAME: Bug Byte releases *Mazogs*, the treasure-hunting maze game on the ZX81. It is later released on the Spectrum.



8 June 1991
■ NEWS: Atari abandons its Panther console project in order to concentrate on the Jaguar.



5 June 1984
■ INDUSTRY: After four years of games production, Quicksilva is bought out by Argus Press Software for a reported £1 million.



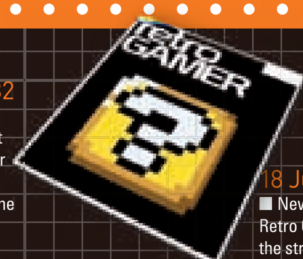
12 June 1984
■ INDUSTRY: Dragon Data looks to be going into liquidation. Tandy is mooted as coming in with a rescue package…



12 June 2009
■ Be sure to pick up the Wii version of *Indiana Jones And The Staff Of Kings*. It includes *Fate Of Atlantis* for free.



17 June 1982
■ INDUSTRY: A circuit board fault in the first Sinclair Spectrum batch means the machine isn't sent out on launch day.



18 June 2009
■ New issue of Retro Gamer hits the streets.

Retro Evolution

Looking at the classic franchises being revived for a new generation of gamers



The History Lesson

When *Silent Hill* first appeared on the PlayStation it was up against some pretty tough competition. Capcom's *Resident Evil* series was ruling the roost and already had two games under its belt (with a third, *Nemesis*, just several months away).

Right from the beginning, though, Konami's game proved itself to be a totally different beast to Capcom's recently established series, even if they did share the same finicky control system. Whereas the protagonists of *Resident Evil* were hardened officers, used to using weapons on a regular basis, *Silent Hill*'s Harry Mason was an average Joe who swung the makeshift weapons he could pick up with all the grace of a rusty mechanical crane. Propelled by the disappearance of his young daughter Cheryl, Harry's descent into darkness is handled brilliantly, with the plot having a far more adult theme than Capcom's first two *Resi* outings. After all, why else would you take on a selection of gruesome monsters (including those infamous inside-out babies) unless the safety of your child outweighed the need of your own?

With its creepy soundtrack, knowing nods to classic horror – all the roads in Silent Hill are named after famous horror authors – and dark themes, the original Silent Hill remains an enjoyable, if slightly disturbing, addition to the survival horror franchise.

Released two years later, the sequel introduced gamers to a brand new protagonist – James Sutherland – and pushed the bad taste envelope even further with some truly disturbing foes, including the chilling Pyramid Head, whose triangular metal mask and oversized sword have since become a trademark of the series and film.

With plots involving murder, child abuse and suicide, *Silent Hill 2* is arguably one of the only videogames to handle these serious themes in such a sure-handed manner. As with *Silent Hill*, you care about not only James, but many of the individuals he meets, and while some of them will ultimately repulse you, many remain tragic, saddened figures.



*** What we think**

It'll be interesting to see if Climax can capture the atmosphere of the original *Silent Hill* game. The Wii version has the most potential out of the three, but there seem to be enough twists on the core gameplay to keep me happy.



*** What we think**

I really enjoyed *Silent Hill Origins*, and *Shattered Dreams* already sounds like it has a lot of potential. The series definately needs a shaking up at the moment, and this exciting looking reboot could well be the very answer.

Sadly, this second outing would become the highlight of the series. By the time *Silent Hill 3* arrived in 2003, the ideas were starting to run a little dry. Akira Yamaoka's superb score still kept the tension high, but newcomer Heather is probably one of the most underdeveloped characters in the series. A pity as *SH3* is a direct sequel to the first game, set 17 years afterwards, so Konami had the chance to do something really special with it.

Silent Hill 4: The Room was originally intended to be a different

Selected Silent Hill Timeline



Silent Hill
YEAR RELEASED: 1999
SYSTEM: PLAYSTATION

Silent Hill 2
YEAR RELEASED: 2001
SYSTEM: PS2

Silent Hill 2: Inner Fears
YEAR RELEASED: 1999
SYSTEM: XBOX

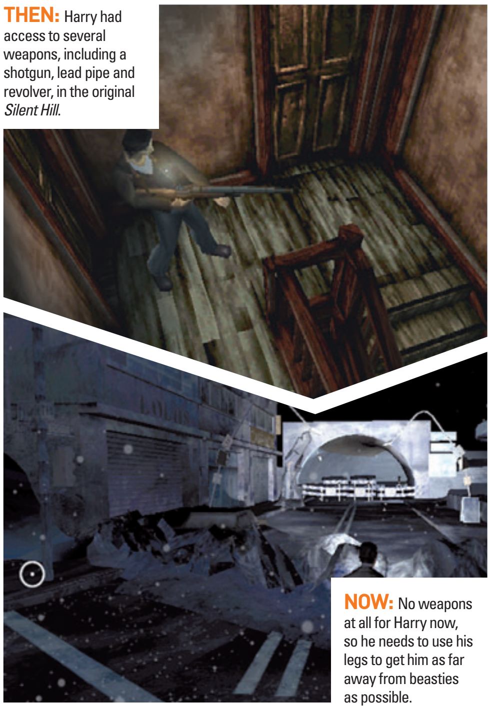
Silent Hill 3
YEAR RELEASED: 2003
SYSTEM: PS2, PC

Silent Hill 4: The Room
YEAR RELEASED: 2004
SYSTEM: PS2, PC, XBOX

Silent Hill: Origins
YEAR RELEASED: 2007
SYSTEM: PSP

Silent Hill Mobile/Orphan
YEAR RELEASED: 2007
SYSTEM: MOBILE

What's Changed? The new additions that weren't in the original game



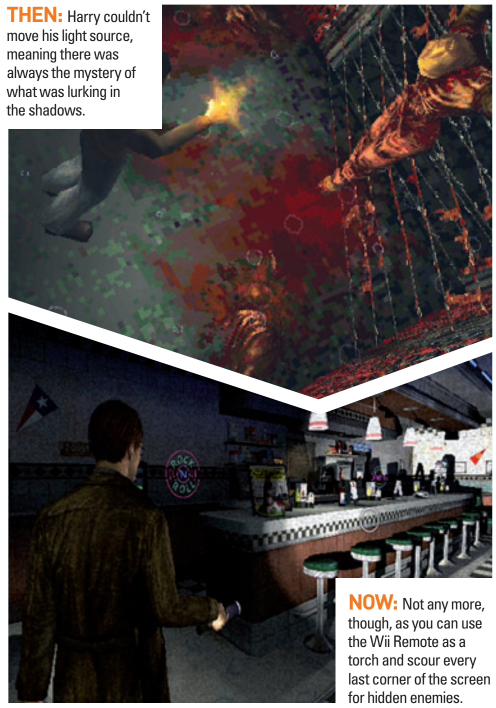
THEN: Harry had access to several weapons, including a shotgun, lead pipe and revolver, in the original *Silent Hill*.

NOW: No weapons at all for Harry now, so he needs to use his legs to get him as far away from beasties as possible.



THEN: Once upon a time, all Harry had to rely on was a battered old transistor radio that warned him of approaching enemies.

NOW: Times have changed, though, and he can now use a mobile phone and even take pictures with a handy camera.



THEN: Harry couldn't move his light source, meaning there was always the mystery of what was lurking in the shadows.

NOW: Not any more, though, as you can use the Wii Remote as a torch and scour every last corner of the screen for hidden enemies.

game entirely, with the gameplay switching between first- and third-person perspectives. There are definitely some great ideas going on here – you start off in a room shown in the first-person and need to work out how to escape it, before moving to the more traditional viewpoint – but the story, while sometimes unsettling, isn't quite as strong as what appears in *SH2*. Gameplay is also rather uninvolving, with bland puzzles and disappointing enemies.

Silent Hill: Origins for the PSP marked a big change for the franchise, as it not only attempted to thread together how *Silent Hill* first began, but was also the first game in the series to be developed by someone other than Team Silent. It works far better than expected, with the small screen and a decent set of headphones making the experience quite terrifying, which is more than can be said for the most recent game, *Homecoming*. Focusing far more on combat – your protagonist is a soldier looking for his younger brother – *Homecoming* ignores all the recent advancements to the genre and as a result feels rather stale.

Something needs to be done to stop the once classic series from sliding into obscurity, so it should come as no surprise to learn that the latest game in the series sees the franchise coming full circle.

Silent Hill: Shattered Dreams is not a direct remake of the original game, but more a re-imagining of the events. Weapons no longer appear, so Harry must now flee from enemies by jumping through windows, barricading doors and using any other means of escape at his disposal. These chases can involve multiple enemies, so the potential is there for some truly terrifying encounters and plenty of brown-trouser moments. Harry also has access to a number of new gadgets that will further aid him in his lonely quest. Plot-wise, Harry still appears to be searching for his daughter, but everything else is so far being kept under wraps. At the moment, *Shattered Memories* is already showing a hell of a lot of potential. Whether that potential is fully tapped remains to be seen. *

* What we think



I can't decide what to think of this. On the one hand it has the potential to make a brilliant Wii game. On the other, recent news of the PS2 version makes me wonder if all the ideas were made on that system first.

THE PROBING QUESTIONS

We speak to the people behind Silent Hill's re-invention



■ RG: Why choose the Wii for this re-imagining of *Silent Hill*? Is it just so you can call it a Wii-imagining?

Tomm Hulett: "If you're trying to scare a person, they need to be immersed in the world you're creating first. The Wii controls allow us to give players unprecedented contact with the world of Silent Hill. *Shattered Dreams* offers new concepts, which we feel make more sense, and create a scarier atmosphere than the genre has previously. The ability to say Wii-imagining is just a nice bonus."



■ RG: What's been done to placate fans of the original?

Sam Barlow (Lead Designer): The storyline we have created has layers that will appeal only to the fans. This whole theme of 'shattered memories' works on an even deeper level if you know the original storyline and characters. What we've done with those characters, how the plot moves in different directions. It's a real head-trip.

Also I think the fans, they're going to appreciate interacting with this world in a way that is way more immersive than ever before -- a chance to walk the streets of Silent Hill with your character, rather than from the removed cinematic perspective.



■ RG: The lack of weapons make this sound like a true return to survival horror. Was this always the idea from the beginning?

Mark Simmons: Game Designer: "We consciously steered ourselves away from the 'more action' direction other survival horror titles have followed and decided to focus on the words 'survival' and 'horror'. We've tried to create an experience that is close to the scenes from a traditional slasher horror movie. A movie where the protagonist is being chased by a relentless and terrifying aggressor and is desperate to escape. In this game Harry is not an adept melee-fighting, metal-pipe-swinging, shotgun-wielding action hero – he is a normal guy, like you or me. He is in a nightmare that is truly terrifying and all he can do is run to escape.

■ RG: Can we expect lots of different endings, and will the storyline remain nice and bleak?

Tomm: Every game in the series has had multiple endings, and we're not about to stop now. Fans of *Silent Hill* should be very pleased with the story.

BACK TO THE EIGHTIES

THE LATEST NEWS FROM MARCH 1987





» The Atari Mega ST; looking good and playing better, the 16-bit era was well and truly here.



» [C64] *Highway Encounter*: It's a one-way street to oblivion… or at least the mothership and massed ranks of aliens.



» [Amstrad] *Impossaball*: An original but frustrating idea that continued the trend of new games featuring ball manipulation.

MARCH 1987 – Amiga arrives, Mega ST too, Nemesis vs Nemesis, hello to Auf Wiedersehen, everyone is Head Over Heels, the Mastertronic empire grows further and there's a double dose of Breakout. Richard Burton feels the pain of ball on wall action…

Commodore's eagerly awaited new Amiga machines finally appeared. The Amiga A500 (£587), targeting the home user, and the A2000 (£1,641), aiming for the more serious and technical end of the spectrum, were on show to the public for the first time at the Hannover Computer Fair in Germany.

Britain would have to hang fire until June before getting their first look at the machines at the Commodore Show. They would go on sale shortly afterwards.

Commodore's great rival Atari was also in Hannover with a new machine on show. The Mega ST was essentially a standard ST machine with extra memory and a custom built-in blitter co-processor chip for speeding up the graphics operations. The official launch was expected mid-1992 with a £1,000 the asking price. Ouch.

Atari's existing machines were receiving a price cut, with the 520 ST-FM down to £399 and the 520 ST-M costing around £259, although you would have to source your own disk drive.

Kevin Toms's *Football Manager* was getting promotion to the 16-bit league with an Atari ST version announced. Meanwhile, Mr Toms's newest release, *President*, would see you running a country rather than a football club. Presumably your vice-president wouldn't be Kenny Sansom though…



» [MSX] *Krakout*: No, not the name of a new haemorrhoid cream but yet another *Breakout* variant to add to the pile.

March featured a clash of game names in a tale of two *Nemesis* titles, both of which were heading for shop shelves simultaneously. There was Konami's coin-op conversion of the arcade shoot-'em-up whilst Martech had developed a *2000AD* comic favourite into a game, namely *Nemesis The Warlock*. Both emerged within days of each other with Konami's *Nemesis* receiving mixed reviews and Martech's not faring much better.

The curse of the mediocre *2000AD* licensed character based game strikes again… yet Martech insisted on tormenting themselves further by attempting to convert another *2000AD* stalwart, *Slaine*. Brace yourselves lads, I feel a warp spasm brewing…

Another battle of games was ensuing with the almost simultaneous release of two more *Breakout* variants. Not since the days of the Spectrum *Horizons* tape had bat and ball games featured so prevalently in the new release schedule. Last month, CRL's 3D version, *Ballbreaker*, was unleashed, while this month Gremlin Graphics and Imagine went head to head with their own block-busting interpretations, *Krakout* and *Arkanoid* respectively.



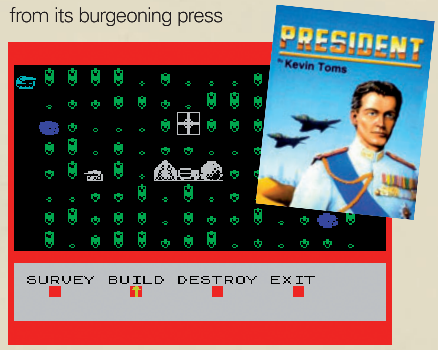
» [C64] *Nemesis: The Final Challenge*: *Gradius* by any other name, Konami's conversion was adequate but not spectacular.

Gremlin had once again decided to go back to a tried and tested format for its next release, too. *Auf Wiedersehen Monty* would see the next instalment of the Monty Mole franchise in which he travels around Europe collecting cash to buy his own island.

It wasn't quite as much fun as *Monty On The Run* but was still immensely playable on all formats, including the Commodore Plus/4 and MSX, and received good reviews. However, *Zzap!64*'s appraisal was scathing, topped off with a miserly 46% overall. Bit harsh, fellas.

Over in Franceland, there was news that Infogrames was converting two Amstrad games to the Spectrum: the marvellous *Get Dexter* and so-so *Doomsday Blues*. They would revert back to their original French names of *Crafton & Xunk* and *Eden Blues* although they might as well have gone for *Missing In Action* and *AWOL*, as neither ever made it past development.

Budgeteering software king, Mastertronic, still buzzing from its Melbourne House acquisition, had yet more news emanating from its burgeoning press



» [Spectrum] *President*: Take charge of a country and run it into the ground. Recession and bank bailouts not included.

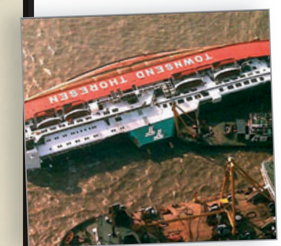
1987

MARCH NEWS

6 March – a Townsend Thoresen car ferry, The Herald Of Free Enterprise, on its return journey to Dover, capsized just out of port from Zeebrugge in Belgium. The ferry had departed with its bow doors still open, which led to the car decks flooding. It took just a minute and a half for the ferry to roll over. The weather and ocean were both calm and it was just 100 yards from shore in shallow water. 650 passengers boarded the ferry, many of which were readers of *The Sun* newspaper who had taken advantage of the frequent cheap ferry/holiday deals the newspaper offered. In total 193 people died. The coroner's inquest into the disaster later found that gross negligence had been committed. A verdict of unlawful killing followed and a corporate manslaughter charge was brought before the Crown Prosecution. The case later collapsed.



» Vincent Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* painting is worth the same as 40 million Beef & Tomato King Size Pot Noodles.



» A tragedy that should never have happened. If the crew had checked the bow doors, 193 people would still be alive.

31 March saw Vincent Van Gogh's painting, *Vase With 15 Sunflowers*, set a new world record as the most expensive painting when it was auctioned. It sold for just under $40 million, eclipsing the previous record of $12 million. The painting was part of a series of eleven studies done by Van Gogh, but it soon became synonymous with the painter and the obscene prices spent on fine art at auction.

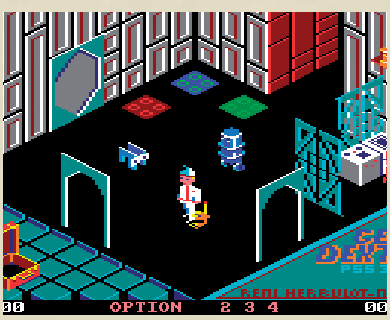


» [Commodore 64] *Nemesis The Warlock*: Be pure… be vigilant… be-ollocks.

department. With the introduction of Mastersound and Mastervision, the worlds of cheap CDs and VHS videos were about to be given the Mastertronic treatment, with the first releases due around May. Although a bold move, it didn't fare very well. It was a short-lived excursion from the gaming world with the quality more akin to Ronco than EMI.

And from blinding mediocrity we jump to the stellar heights of two little symbiotic animals in isometric gaming heaven. Jon Ritman and Bernie Drummond's masterpiece, the most excellent *Head Over Heels*, was released this week by Ocean on the Spectrum and Amstrad.

Yes, with a cursory glance it did look similar to their earlier *Batman* release but it was only the visuals that bore any resemblance, with the gameplay a completely different animal entirely. Once the magazines of the time had had their wicked way with the game and revealed their findings, it didn't take a genius to work out that *Head Over Heels* was going to be huge… and rightly so.



» [Amstrad] *Get Dexter*: The planned Spectrum conversion was going to revert to its original French name of *Crafton & Xunk*.

Amstrad Action assessed, graded and came up with a bagful of AA Rave awards with their top choice, the Mastergame, bestowed upon *Impossaball* (Hewson). The Ravers were: *Acrojet* (US Gold/MicroProse), *Rebelstar* (Firebird), *Super Robin Hood* (Code Masters) and *Hyperbowl* (Mastertronic).

The brotherhood of Newsfield magazines, *Crash*, *Zzap!* and *Amtix*, must've suffered a dearth of quality games for review for March with very little for them to get roused about. Those Ludlow folk must be hard to please…

Amtix Accoladed *Little Computer People* (Activision), *Crash* Smashed *Feud* (Bulldog) and *Ranarama* (Hewson), and *Zzap!* thoroughly Sizzled *Mutants* (Ocean) and *Dragon's Lair II: Escape From Singe's Castle* (Software Projects). No Gold Medal award either. At least the C&VG staff liked stuff…

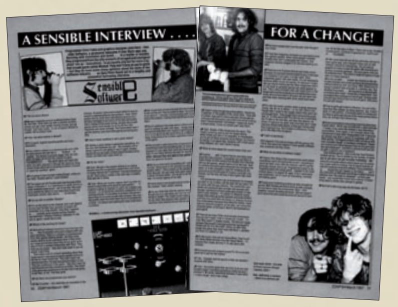
The *Computer & Video Games* reviewers dished out *C&VG* Hit awards to *Nemesis* (Konami, MSX), *10th Frame* (US Gold, C64), *Ranarama* (Hewson, Spectrum), *Ninja* (Mastertronic, Spectrum), *Super Cycle* (US Gold, Spectrum), *Sky Runner* (Cascade, C64), *Highway Encounter* (Vortex, C64) and *They Stole A Million* (Ariolasoft, Spectrum).

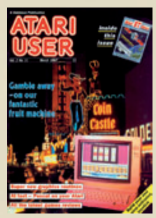
THIS MONTH IN…



ZZAP!

With Ocean only revealing tiny morsels of information about its new game *Wizball*, *Zzap!* caught up with the programmers, Mr Jon Hare and Mr Chris Yates – the two halves of Sensible Software – to find our more. So, in a nutshell: wizard in bouncing ball, spinning cat and collecting colours. Groovy.





ATARI USER

This month saw *Atari User* abandon its incorporated magazine dedicated to the Atari ST. With the 16-bit machine fan base growing steadily, the publishers decided to run *Atari ST User* as a separate entity as from the April issue. Good news if you owned an 8-bit or 16-bit Atari, bad news if you owned both.





CRASH

It was Reader Awards time again at *Crash*, with 1986's top games vying for public recognition. Best Game Overall went to *Starglider* (Rainbird), Best Platform Game went to *Dynamite Dan II* (Mirrorsoft), Best Software House was Elite and the politely put 'Least Pleasing Game' was *World Cup Carnival* (US Gold).



CHARTS

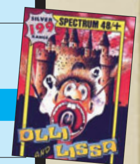
MARCH 1987

MUSIC



1. Everything I Own (Boy George)
2. I Got The Sweetest Feeling (Jackie Wilson)
3. Live It Up (Mental As Anything)
4. The Great Pretender (Freddie Mercury)
5. Stand By Me (Ben E King)

SPECTRUM



1. Gauntlet (US Gold)
2. Ollie & Lissa (Firebird)
3. Super Soccer (Imagine)
4. Trivial Pursuit (Domark)
5. Cobra (Ocean)

COMMODORE 64



1. Gauntlet (US Gold)
2. Computer Hits 10 Volume 3 (Beau Jolly)
3. Paperboy (Elite)
4. Trivial Pursuit (Domark)
5. Space Harrier (Elite)

AMSTRAD

1. Gauntlet (US Gold)
2. 180 (Mastertronic)
3. Konami Coin-Ops (Imagine)
4. Computer Hits 10 Volume 3 (Beau Jolly)
5. Five A Side Soccer (Mastertronic)



BACK TO THE NINETIES



THE LATEST NEWS FROM NOVEMBER 1991

NOVEMBER 1991 – Micronet cast aside, PC Engine LT arrives, Lotus 2 too, drool for Zool, Parasol set to Star, Mercenary III, Birds Of Prey finally swoops in and Lemmy gets into a fight. Richard Burton goes head-banging and dislocates his forehead…

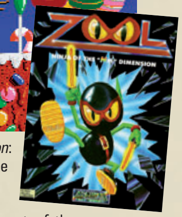


» [SNES] *Super Ghouls 'N Ghosts*: Atmospheric graphics and sound combine to make an enjoyable side-scrolling adventure.



» [Amiga] *Motörhead*: Lemmy takes on fans of other music genres to find his kidnapped band. Completely bonkers yet entertaining.





» [Amiga] *Zool: Ninja Of The Nth Dimension*: Sweety Land and Fruit Land; just two of the whacked-out levels to explore in *Zool*.

Micronet800, the Prestel-based online magazine ran by British Telecom, came to an end with members' services officially closing on 31 October and the plug finally pulled in early November. For many Micronet800 was their first experience of online communication with its magazine format, chatlines, simplistic email facility and online games including many great Multi User Dungeon adventures like *Shades* (which can be still played at http://games.world.co.uk/shades/).

There was exciting news from Japan where the newest member of the PC Engine console family was born. The PC Engine LT was a portable version of its bigger brother featuring a flip-top 4-inch colour LCD screen similar to a laptop's, in-built TV tuner and HuCard CD support. It was also hefty, with it being more luggable than portable. Still, the finished article was superb but also very expensive, costing just shy of 100,000yen (about £675).

Needless to say, the price scared most people off and it bombed. It never got released outside Japan and therefore, naturally, is very rare and worth an absolute fortune today.



» The PC Engine LT: a magnificent piece of kit blighted by an exorbitant price tag.

Gremlin had been busy signing a licensing deal, developing a new platform game and polishing its newest creation for release this month. A tie-in with the fastest tash in motorsport would see *Nigel Mansell World Championship* in the shops in early 1992 for Amiga, ST and Mega Drive.

Finished and looking superb was *Lotus Turbo Challenge 2*, the long-awaited follow-up to Gremlin's hit racing game. And finally from Gremlin, the weird and confectionary-encrusted landscape of *Zool: Ninja Of The Nth Dimension* was currently being worked on and looking mightily impressive.

With the cutest, mushiest platform game in existence, *Rodland*, riding high in the charts, it seems Ocean was intent on creating something equally as nauseatingly colourful. Ocean revealed it was well on the way for an early 1992 release with the third instalment of the *Bubble Bobble* series: a conversion of Taito's *Parasol Stars*, intended for the Atari ST, Amiga, NES and Game Boy.

A C64 version was also under development and almost completed until a domestic dispute between the programmer and his wife led to the development disks being destroyed. Ocean pulled the plug on the project and effectively left the C64 scene to concentrate on 16-bit games.

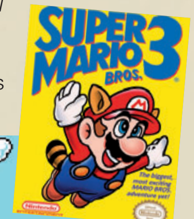


» [Atari ST] *Parasol Stars*: Takes the cutesy game baton from *Rodland* and makes your eyes bleed with happiness. Superb.

Strangest tie-in announcement of the month must surely go to Virgin Games who thought there was a game to be had from those heavy rockers, Motörhead. In this Amiga scrolling beat-'em-up, you take on the part of the warty one attempting to rescue his fellow band members who've been kidnapped. Sounds unspeakably bad but, inexplicably, it somehow worked…

Fans of Paul Woakes and his *Mercenary* series were about to spontaneously combust with Novagen reporting that *Mercenary III: The Dion Crisis* wasn't far from being completed and ready for general consumption Amiga and Atari ST gamers.

The game would be similar to its predecessors but, according to the press release, the interaction between you and the intelligent characters incorporated in the game would be impressive. Unfortunately, it was more superficial than artificial intelligence. Nonetheless, *Mercenary III* proved to be a superb addition to the franchise when it finally hit the shops early in 1992.



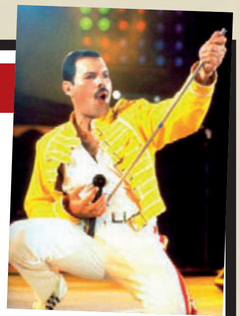


» [NES] Super Mario Bros 3: *Computer & Video Games* wisely gave this NES classic a C&VG Hit award.

1991

NOVEMBER NEWS

5 November saw Robert Maxwell found dead in the sea off Tenerife. The head of Mirror Group, publisher of The Daily Mirror newspaper, was once interested in buying Sinclair Research from Sir Clive Sinclair. Why he fell overboard from his yacht was never uncovered, although it was revealed that the Mirror Group pension fund was light to the tune of £440 million and that the company itself was badly in debt.



» Queen's lead singer and ultimate showman passed away after contracting the AIDS virus. Who Wants To Live Forever… indeed…



» Robert Maxwell was found dead after falling overboard from his yacht. Mirror Group was in dire financial straits.

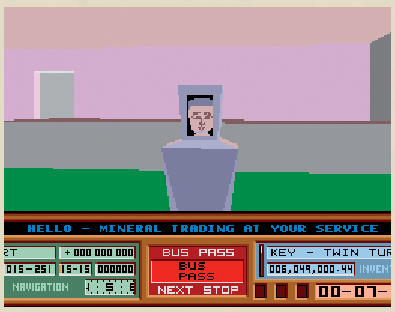
24 November saw the death of Farookh Bulsara, better known as Freddie Mercury, the lead singer of the rock band Queen. Just one day earlier he had announced that he was HIV positive. He died the following day of bronchio-pneumonia as a result of the AIDS virus at the age of 45.

There was cheerier news on 18 November when Terry Waite, the envoy to the Archbishop of Canterbury, was released from captivity after being kidnapped in February 1987. He had been in Beirut, Lebanon, attempting to negotiate the release of Western kidnap victims when he himself was taken by Islamic Jihad.





» [Amiga CD32] *Nigel Mansell World Championship*: A bit like Nige's tash – looks impressive but doesn't really do anything.



» [Amiga] *Mercenary III: The Dios Crisis*: As good as the earlier games, with the bonus of six different ways to complete it.

The classic space trading game, *Elite*, was long overdue a sequel of its own but finally that time had come with news that *Frontier: Elite 2* was on the way. Oddly, arcade gaming maestros Konami had reportedly bid and won for the rights to publish the game with David Braben once again at the helm.

Although it took almost two years for the game to finally make an appearance, it was worth it. Amiga, ST and CD32 owners prepare to change your underpants… just make sure your Amiga 500 has some extra grunt to cope with this two-disk universe or else…

One of the longest-running sagas in gaming finally came to a conclusion with a shocking report that *Birds Of Prey*, touted by publisher Electronic Arts as the most realistic home computer flight simulation ever made, was due for release on the Amiga.

Argonaut Software, the highly acclaimed developers behind *Starglider* and *After Burner* on the Amiga, had spent five years developing *Birds Of Prey*. Was it worth it after such a long wait? With no fewer than 40 detailed aircraft to fly combined with comprehensive and varied missions, you would hope it would be epoch-shatteringly good.

To be fair, it was excellent but the major bugbear of having crammed so much detail into the game left the graphics to jerk and stutter. Not the end of the world but damn annoying. Meanwhile, Argonaut pressed on with its next game, *Advanced Tactical Air Command*. That'll be another flight sim then…

Multiformat magazine *Zero* dredged through games galore and rated *Formula One Grand Prix* (MicroProse, Amiga/ST), *Pitfighter* (Domark, Amiga), *Last Ninja 3* (System 3, Amiga), *Silent Service II* (MicroProse, Amiga) as the only games worthy of a Zero Hero award. The reviewer must have been an Amiga fanboy…

Meanwhile, *Computer & Video Games* found comfort in more than one format with C&VG Hit stamps plonked firmly onto *Alien Breed* (Team 17, Amiga), *Super Mario Bros 3* (Nintendo, NES), *Formula One Grand Prix* (MicroProse, Atari ST), *Super Tennis* (Tonkin House, SNES) and *James Pond 2: Codename Robocod* (Millennium, Amiga).

Finally, console-dedicated tome *Mean Machines* felt that *F-22 Interceptor* (Electronic Arts, Mega Drive), *Super Kick Off* (US Gold, Master System) and *Super Ghouls 'N Ghosts* (Capcom, SNES) all deserved to receive their Mega Game award for gaming loveliness.

THIS MONTH IN…



ZERO

Zero featured an article on the flavour of the month, Virtual Reality. With the headset and power glove you could play and be part of 3D games for that total immersion sensation. Good idea, rubbish games. Just think back to Craig Charles and the VR game-show *Cyberzone*. Awooga indeed.





COMPUTER & VIDEO GAMES

C&VG celebrated its tenth birthday issue. Such longevity for a magazine that had seen many of its rivals fold could only be commended. *C&VG* eventually succumbed in October 2004, but raised phoenix-like in a new form, *CVG Presents*, in 2008.





ACE

ACE was also celebrating with its 50th issue and the team were making some very bold statements in their editorial, testifying they would not take "any more" and that it was a magazine that "stood up" to substandard gaming. Well, five issues later it was gone…



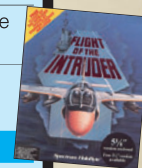
CHARTS

NOVEMBER 1991



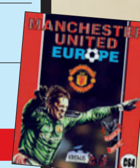
AMIGA

1 Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker (Virgin)
2 Thunderhawk (Core Design)
3 Silent Service 2 (MicroProse)
4 Cruise For A Corpse (US Gold)
5 Monkey Island (US Gold)



ATARI ST

1 Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker (Virgin)
2 Flight Of The Intruder (Mirrorsoft)
3 Back To The Future Part II (Mirrorsoft)
4 Manchester United Europe (Krisalis)
5 Railroad Tycoon (MicroProse)



COMMODORE 64

1 Manchester United Europe (Krisalis)
2 Rodland (Storm)
3 The Dizzy Collection (Code Masters)
4 Creatures (Thalamus)
5 F16 Combat Pilot (Digital Integration)

MUSIC

1 Dizzy (Vic Reeves & The Wonderstuff)
2 Black Or White (Michael Jackson)
3 Get Ready For This (2 Unlimited)
4 Rhythm Is A Mystery (K-Klass)
5 If You Were With Me Now (Kylie Minogue & Keith Washington)



12

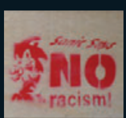


ALIEN SOLDIER

BUT IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE BLOODY HARD



- » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- » **RELEASED:** 1995
- » **GENRE:** RUN-AND-GUN
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** MEGA DRIVE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £20+



HISTORY

Is a balls nasty hard game still good if it's designed to be balls nasty hard? And is it still fun?

I mention this because the first thing anyone will tell you about *Alien Soldier* is just how D-pad breakingly difficult it is. I find this quite refreshing though and I think it adds a nice comfort zone to the actual game, as you're basically given the feeling that it's not you playing the game like an idiot but are actually being made to suffer.

But let's move on from that for a moment, as I want to discuss some of the few non-boss enemies – mainly because they appear to have been created via a process of designers taking illegal hallucinogenic substances and staring at flock wallpaper. We've got a walking mouth, a blue blob with what can only be described as a vagina and Robby the Robot. And that's just in the first level alone!

WE'RE STOPPING THIS READER'S REVIVAL TO BRING YOU A BRIEF INTERLUDE: (Treasure + Mega Drive) + (Gameplay + Game Mechanics) = awesome.

So where were we? Oh yes. Each level in *Alien Soldier* is effectively a boss rush. There are a few screens worth of bonkers-looking enemies to plough down before you arrive at a boss. I can't comment on every boss that appears because I'm happy to admit I've never completed the game. However, the ones I have fought give me no end of trouble. Their patterns are complex and they'll defeat you time after time until you finally get your degree in Treasure logic.

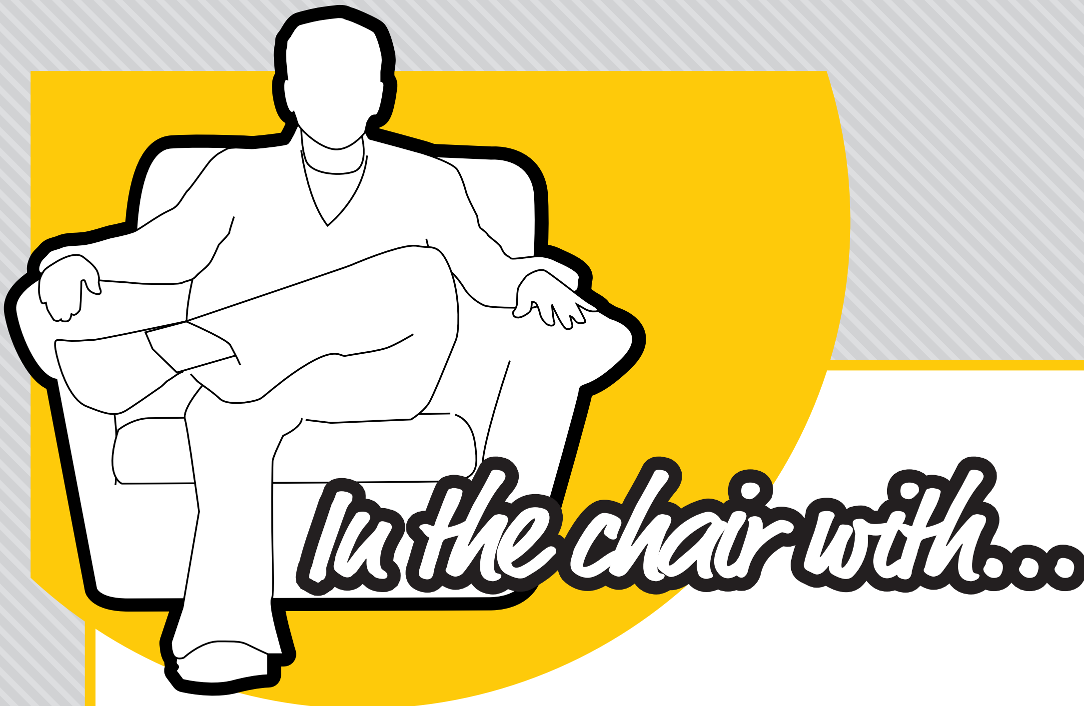
Despite all this I've never found myself getting frustrated with *Alien Soldier*. Maybe it's that aforementioned comfort zone. Knowing that the game isn't broken takes away a lot of that desire to nut the screen. So why am I recommending it? Well I guess that depends on how masochistic your idea of fun is, and I think it's the weakest of weakest Mega Drive Treasure games (well, except for *Light Crusader*). When all's said and done though it's still a good (if not at times crack-head strange) game and I enjoy it. Mind you I enjoy *Cannibal Corpse* so what do I know?

Want to appear in the magazine? Then be sure to upload classic profiles at www.retrogamer.net



RETROBATE PROFILE

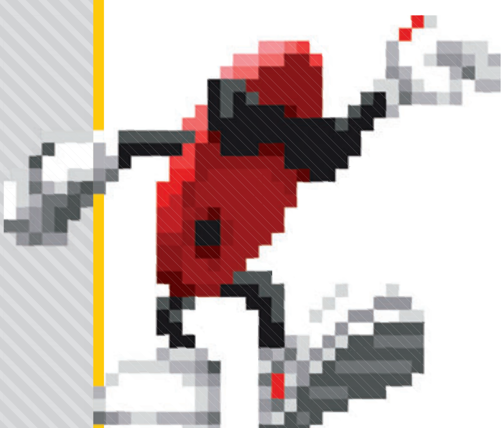
» NAME: SCOTT REED
» JOINED: 6 JAN 2009
» LOCATION: ESSEX
» OCCUPATION: UNEMPLOYED BARMAN
» FAV GAMES SYSTEM: MEGA DRIVE



JOHN TWIDDY

He's been working in the games industry for over two decades, but not much is known about System 3's John Twiddy. Darran Jones decided to rectify this by catching up with The Last Ninja programmer at System 3's plush Mayfair offices. Fans of Putty Squad may want to read on...

OUR LATEST IN The Chair interviewee is somewhat different from the others. It's not that he hasn't made any decent games, or that he has no interesting tales to tell, it's just that he tends to keep himself to himself and lets his games do the talking. Responsible for both the first two Last Ninja games and the now legendary lost Amiga game that is Putty Squad, John Twiddy has now been working on and off for System 3 for over 20 years and during that period he found time to set up his own company – Vivid Image – and even worked on the ill-fated Konix Multisystem. The following interview should hopefully reveal a little more behind the man who could make the Commodore 64 sing.



RETRO GAMER: So John, what did you want to do when you were still at school?

JOHN TWIDDY: I was really interested in electronics and that's what I went to study at university. I went up to Newcastle and went on an electronics and microprocessor applications degree course. It was while I was on this course that I first became aware of the demo scene. As a result it wasn't long before I started dabbling in both the demo scene and the hacking scene, as well as making my own games.

Initially I was using the university computers to create my own code, and that became the framework for my early first games. I had a Commodore PET (I think that's what it was called) to begin with and eventually progressed from that to the Commodore 64.

RG: So was the Commodore PET like a Christmas or birthday present?

JT: I think I must have been 15 at the time when the machine first caught my interest. Anyway, my 16th birthday was coming up and I pestered my father constantly about it. I literally got all these sales sheets for it and would leave them everywhere around the house; on top of the TV, on his pillow, I put the things everywhere I could think of. He was concerned about buying me the PET though as he thought it would have an antisocial impact on me, but in reality it was completely different, because you would always have your mates coming around.

Happily my dad changed his mind and they gave me the PET on my 16th birthday. Obviously, from that point on I started creating games in BASIC, eventually progressing to machine code and then it was onwards and upwards from there.

RG: So when you started using BASIC, were you effectively self-taught?

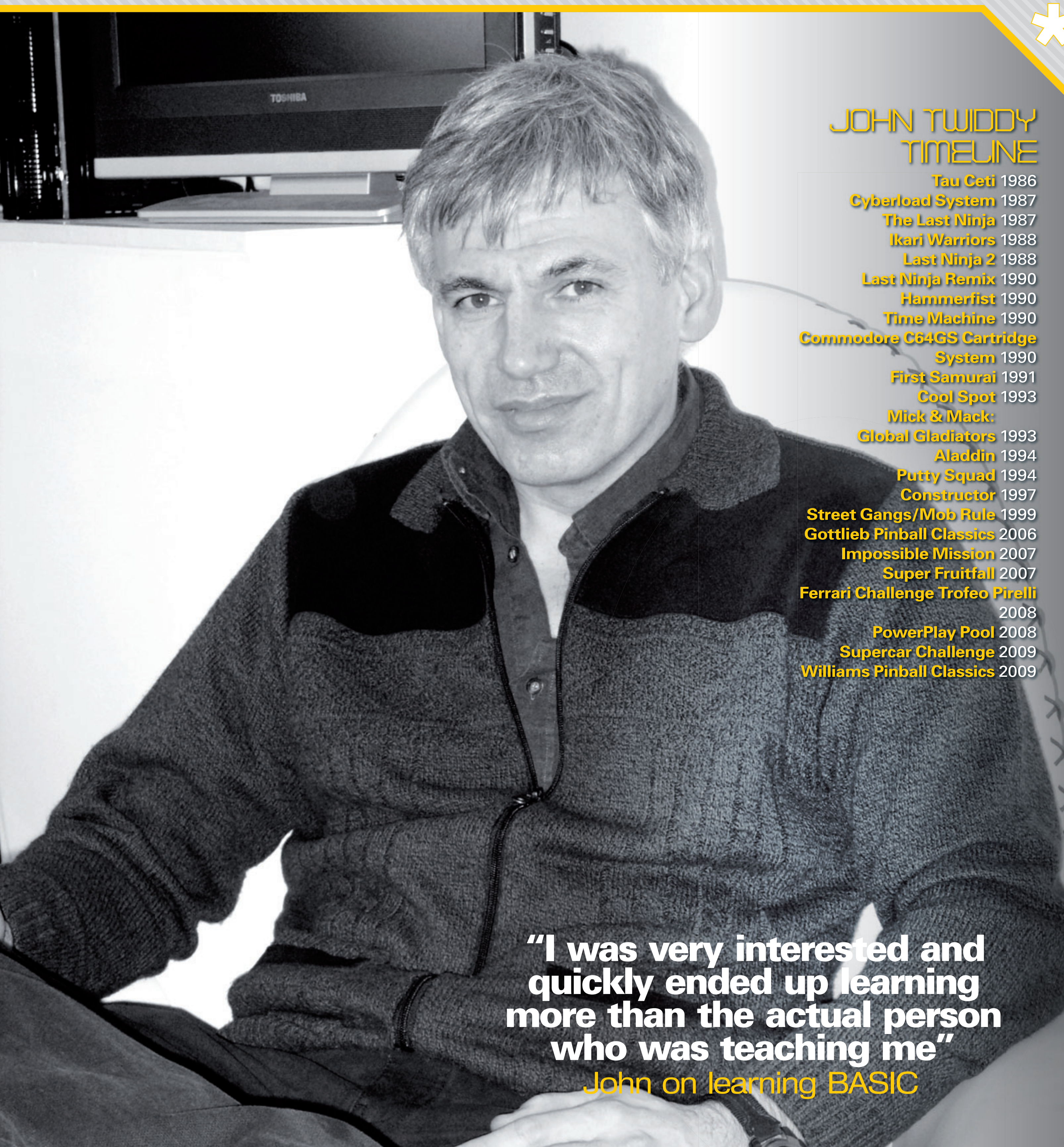
JT: Yes, pretty much. I did a computer studies course whilst I was still at school, but obviously I was very interested and quickly ended up learning more than the actual person who was teaching me. Obviously back in those days it was a very new subject, so I would be making use of the school's connection to a nearby university and we had a little terminal with a modem that you could connect up to it and you had to type all your programs in; these programs obviously had to be very simple ones. And that's pretty much how I got into the programming side of things.

RG: So before you went into the games industry, you were obviously interested in electronics. What were you working towards?

JT: It would have definitely been electronics in terms of the microprocessor side of things. In fact, I actually started working for Super Soft, and I initially began working on business applications for them.

DOWNLOAD THE PODCAST

Want the full lowdown on John's interview? Then head on over to **www.imagine-publishing.co.uk/podcasts.php**



JOHN TWIDDY TIMELINE

Tau Ceti 1986
Cyberload System 1987
The Last Ninja 1987
Ikari Warriors 1988
Last Ninja 2 1988
Last Ninja Remix 1990
Hammerfist 1990
Time Machine 1990
Commodore C64GS Cartridge System 1990
First Samurai 1991
Cool Spot 1993
Mick & Mack: Global Gladiators 1993
Aladdin 1994
Putty Squad 1994
Constructor 1997
Street Gangs/Mob Rule 1999
Gottlieb Pinball Classics 2006
Impossible Mission 2007
Super Fruitfall 2007
Ferrari Challenge Trofeo Pirelli 2008
PowerPlay Pool 2008
Supercar Challenge 2009
Williams Pinball Classics 2009

"I was very interested and quickly ended up learning more than the actual person who was teaching me"
John on learning BASIC

In the chair with...

I was creating word processors and spreadsheets for the Amstrad machine, because at the time, while I had been creating my own games at school and university, I hadn't actually spent any time on the producing side of things. I actually made my first game for them, which was called *Pesky Painter* and it was effectively an *Amidar* clone. After my stint at Super Soft I moved to CRL where I worked on the Commodore 64 version of *Tau Ceti*.

RG: What was the reasoning behind the early titles you created? Where they based on the games you used to enjoy playing in the arcades?

JT: Yes definitely. I used to go down to the arcades pretty much every day. The time I was most interested in arcades was during the release of *Defender* and I would come back every day almost with bleeding fingers. Virtually every waking moment was spent down the arcades and out of all the games I played, *Defender* was definitely my favourite. I also enjoyed the likes of *Asteroids* and *Battlezone*, but it was *Defender* which always stood out.

RG: So what was it about *Defender* that you liked?

JT: It was the simplicity and the speed of it as well. I also remember *Battlezone* coming out in my local arcade and being absolutely wowed by it, but it cost me a fortune as I wasn't that good at it. On the other hand I was pretty good at *Defender* and the reality comes down to what game is going to give your ten pence piece the longest play period.

RG: You mentioned CRL earlier, and *Tau Ceti*. How did you get the gig for converting it on the C64?

JT: I was brought up in Aberystwyth, Wales, which was where *Zzap!64*'s Julian Rignall came from. In reality it was via knowing him that helped me out, because he had seen the games that I had been working on and told CRL about them. I went down for my interview and at the time another game I was quite interested in doing a copy of was *Marble Madness*, as that was probably my second favourite arcade

* FIVE TO PLAY

THE LAST NINJA



Year Released: 1987 **Featured Version:** C64

JOHN'S FIRST GAME for System 3 is easily his most well known, even if it's not quite as good as the excellent sequel. Using an isometric viewpoint and boasting a cracking score by C64 musical maestro Ben Daglish, T*he Last Ninja* follows the adventures of Armakuni as he vows revenge against Kunitoki, an evil shogun who has wiped out his clan, leaving him as hey… the last ninja.

It's certainly a little tricky in places – there are far too many pinpoint perfect jumps for our liking – compared with the superior sequel, and the combat isn't as involving as we'd like, but the solid level design, well-animated sprites, gorgeous backgrounds and inventive stages mean that you'll stick with it until you've seen everything the game has to offer.

Interestingly it was also one of the very first Commodore 64 games to appear on the Wii Virtual Console and can be bought there for just a few quid.

IKARI WARRIORS



Year Released: 1988 **Featured Version:** C64

JOHN MENTIONED *IKARI Warriors* was one of his favourite games and even now it's easy to see why he likes it so much. The rotary controls of the arcade original are nowhere to be seen, but this is an otherwise incredibly slick conversion that captures the spirit of the coin-op and provides plenty of hardcore blasting for those with an itchy trigger finger. Hardly surprising when you consider how long John spent playing it. There's a solid two-player mode, the action comes thick and fast and it utterly eclipses both the Spectrum and Amstrad efforts. We can only wonder what other conversions John might have worked his magic on if he'd stayed with Elite.

TAU CETI



Year Released: 1986 **Featured Version:** C64

A DESERVED SIZZLER in issue 16 of *Zzap!64*, *Tau Ceti* is Twiddy's fantastic conversion of the original Spectrum hit by Pete Cooke and Ian Ellery, and bloody good it is too. In fact, once again we'll admit to it being the best version on any of the 8-bit systems (and as regular readers know, we're major Amstrad geeks). Still, when you go back to *Tau Ceti* now, you can tell why everyone made such a big fuss about it in the day. Granted, it moves rather slowly now, but the sheer scope of *Tau Ceti* and its solid visuals still manage to impress, while it's far slicker than both the Amstrad conversion and the Spectrum original. It's little wonder then that *Elite* fans lapped it up.

LAST NINJA 2



Year Released: 1988 **Featured Version:** C64

STICKING TO A mantra of bigger, faster, better, more, *Last Ninja 2* turned out to be the best game in the series and compounded Twiddy's reputation for getting every last little bit of power out of the C64. Set in modern-day New York, Hugh Riley's stunning visuals have received a significant upgrade, while Twiddy's programming skills mean that everything is just that little bit slicker and faster than before. Perhaps the biggest improvement, however, is that it's easier – never too easy, mind – lacking the frustrating jumps that appeared so often in the original. What a pity then that the third game by Stanley Schembri and Dan Phillips wasn't quite up to the same high standard.

PUTTY SQUAD



Year Released: N/A **Featured Version:** Amiga

PUTTY SQUAD IS now legendary to Amiga owners and while it never received an official release, it remains a brilliant piece of work (based on the SNES version which is nigh on identical and *was* released). When the average score from five Amiga magazines is 90%, you know you're in the presence of something special. Amazingly slick, visually stunning and with excellent level design and the amorphous abilities of the blob himself, it's little wonder that Amiga owners still admit to playing the demo. One day the Amiga original may finally get a release (we may even start a petition), but in the meantime track down the SNES version and discover just how good it could have been.

game after *Defender*. So I started producing the sketches and the plans of how I imagined it working and all the gameplay features and took it down to CRL. *Marble Madness* was already out on the Spectrum, though, so they asked me if there was any way that I'd be able to replicate *Tau Ceti* on the Commodore 64. The conversion was quite a fun thing to do because it was relatively mathematical at the time compared to many of the other games, so therefore I quite enjoyed the challenge of getting all the maths working sufficiently fast enough on the C64's processor.

RG: So can you tell us about the sequel *Academy* that you apparently started working on? I know for a fact that Games That Weren't will be very interested in your answer.

JT: To be honest, I'm not sure where the concept of me starting work on it has come from. CRL was basically producing it and I think I went down and had a talk with them about doing it, but that's about as far as it ever went. Unfortunately there is absolutely nothing to show for that.

RG: So what other games were you working on at CRL?

JT: No, it was just *Tau Ceti* that I worked on. After that I was contacted by Elite who wanted me to work on *Ikari Warriors*, so there was this situation where I was still up in Newcastle in a student flat at this point and we were given a sit-down version of *Ikari Warriors* that went in the sitting room. When I think back, that's probably the year I did the worst at university because I was effectively sitting there all the time playing *Ikari Warriors*.

Of course that was back in the day when the guys who were producing the graphics for *Ikari Warriors* were producing them on tape and it was a very slow and laborious project. They'd post the graphics to me, two days later I'd get them and if I could get them to load on my cassette recorder I'd then be able to see what they were doing. Needless to say the process of seeing the graphics and getting them to work was quite a slow one and it was actually during the middle of doing this that Mark Cale from System 3 contacted me and said, "I've got this wonderful concept [for *The Last Ninja*], do you want to come down to London and start working on it?" In those days games were put together normally quite quickly, so I thought it would be a worthwhile thing to do. I went down to London, met Mark and Tim Best and Hugh Riley who was the graphic artist who would be working on it.

Out of all the games I've ever done, because they had already started on it, originally with some Hungarians, they already had plenty of graphics and Hugh was very quick at creating animation sequences. He used a sprite editor and he would literally knock up animation sequences of fighting ninjas with no thought as to how usable they were in the game. So when I first came down I was shown some wonderful sequences of fighting ninjas, but we then had to go through them and I would say, "What's practical here, what can you actually fit into the Commodore 64?" and I had to begin cutting things down. It's probably the only game I've ever worked on where you have far too many graphics and you can actually pick and choose and say things like, "Right, that's impractical, I can't see how that's going to work, this animation sequence could work," so that's pretty much how *The Last Ninja* started.



» A veteran programmer with over 20 years' experience, John still works in the games industry today.

> " I do think that it was far more fun making games back then, especially if you were working on your own "

RG: So in a way then it was almost like with a film where you use storyboarding?

JT: Exactly. It was like visual storyboarding.

RG: Do you think that's one of the reasons why the game became so successful, since you had a clear idea of what you wanted to do?

JT: I think it's probably also due to the fact that because there was so many graphics and we had the opportunity to get rid of the animations that weren't working particularly well; I think that made a huge difference with regards to how it felt. Similarly Hugh produced lots of backgrounds that may or may not have worked, so we were able to choose all the best stuff and make it into an interesting map.



So I think that's one of the reasons why it looked so visually stunning; obviously it was also using hi-res, which in those days was very unusual.

In those days it was so important to keep the amount of graphics down and make everything efficient and he was able to use the graphics in lots of different ways and make them look different. We also had a utility that we called 'the integrator', which would layer all the graphics and allow us to blend and merge them together and would let us change the colour of objects, which made a big difference because you wouldn't be otherwise able to store that many screens in the game at any one time. So we made them up from individual component parts.

RG: So with this finite amount of memory that you had to play with, did that mean that you found making games more challenging back then?

JT: I definitely think it was more fun to create games back then. It was challenging in that you had to be efficient, you had to come up with interesting ways of storing the data, whereas now it's all about the quantity of data, which makes the game difficult to program. Games now require far more people, but I do think that it was far more fun making games back then, especially if you were working on your own, as there was a far greater feeling of achievement when you've managed something difficult on your own. As opposed to when you're working with a team of people and you're only really responsible for one component part.

RG: You left System 3 after *Last Ninja 2*. What happened next?

JT: Well, after *Last Ninja 2* I set up Vivid Image with Mev Dinc and Hugh Riley. So at that point we began working on our own games, although we were still involved with Mark on *Last Ninja 3*, because we were all based in the same town.

After three years of Vivid Image I then started working for Virgin and titles like *Aladdin* and *Cool Spot* and then I ended up going back to System 3 and began on the Amiga version of *Putty Squad*. It had a very similar style of engine to the games I'd be working on at Virgin like *Aladdin*. It was another platform game and it was a relatively easy process for me to adapt it and make it work on the

Amiga. Unfortunately, at that particular time the Amiga market was suffering a bit and in effect it was never released. I was never quite clear why it wasn't released, but I think it was decided that there wouldn't be sufficient enough sales.

It's a shame really, as I really liked it as a game. Instead we ended up converting it to the PC and we did a line-by-line conversion. The game on the Amiga was running at something like 20 frames a second, but on the PC we managed to get it running at 30 frames a second, which I must say made a big difference. Again I'm not quite sure that the PC version was eventually released [it wasn't – ED]. Over the years I have been contacted by people keen to try and resurrect the code and I do have it somewhere in amongst the archives of old defunct computers somewhere. It would be really nice to resurrect it with the appropriate emulator. Whether or not there's an opportunity to do something with it specifically I don't know.

RG: Wouldn't it just be a case of creating it on an ADF file for people to use?

JT: Well I had my own development system that I was using when I was working on it. I had all the files loading off hard drives, so I believe I have all the component parts. I also had my own disk loading system, so it's a case of remembering how it all worked, as I don't actually have a primary disk of it.

RG: You're having a big redesign of your website, where you're going to be covering a lot of your old games, so it would be really cool if you could put it up for download on the website.

JT: Yes, I agree. It would be quite nice to bring it out from the cupboard after this amount of time. It's really just a matter of finding it. I've definitely got it somewhere, I just don't know where.

RG: Going back to Vivid Image. How did you get to team up with Mev Dinc?

JT: Officially Mev came and did the Spectrum version of *The Last Ninja* and we had a programmer in the house. There was this residential estate in Watford, which System 3 rented, so when I came down from Newcastle I was living there and various other programmers were as well. That's where I met Hugh Riley again, who was living in Manchester at the time. Mev moved in with us for a while to work on the Spectrum version. So that's how we all met up and we all got on well with each other, so we teamed up (much to Mark's dismay) and went off to do our own thing.

RG: So what was the main reason behind wanting to start up your own company?

JT: At the end of the day you want to have your own control, and I suppose make more money. If it's your company you've got the artistic control to actually do the games you want to; we all got on very well, so we thought we'd give it a go.



RG: Probably one of the most exciting games that you worked on at Vivid was *Hammerfist*, mainly because it was going to be the big saviour of the Konix. It was a new and exciting looking machine and I can still remember the screenshots from *C&VG*. What was that like?

JT: For us the Konix was a really interesting machine to work on. It had a good processor and it had great graphical capabilities, so from our point of view it was really quite interesting to develop for it. As it happened I was working on the Commodore 64 version and Mev was actually working on the Konix version. We were effectively working at either ends of this long corridor and I would remember him always compressing the Konix version so he could make it look that little bit nicer.

RG: Why do you think the Konix didn't take off? Do you think it was simply too ambitious?

JT: I can't recollect why it failed. I don't know if there were any issues that we weren't aware of. It just never seemed to materialise.

RG: Still, it must have been really exciting working on this new technology?

JT: It was great. I also really loved dealing with the actual engineers who had created it and therefore being involved in the focus testing and discovering how they were making the graphics chip work. Things like that. I had my electronics background, so obviously I was very interested in things like that, so from our point of view it was a very interesting project to work on.

RG: So had did it feel going to work at Virgin? You had your own company and now you were back in a situation where you were effectively being employed again. Did you find the change quite hard?

JT: In some respects, going to work for Virgin was something of a relief. It was all in my control, so if you were late I could do something about it, whereas once you start having a company where you employ other people and you're behind schedule you've got to get the other people to speed up, which isn't all that easy. From the financial side of things it was far better for me and it was actually quite a fun experience. I was effectively copying the games that were coming out on the SNES and enhancing them wherever I could. That particular period of time was quite fun and I was working on titles like *Cool Spot* and *Aladdin*.

RG: *Cool Spot* and *Aladdin* were original Mega Drive games by David Perry. Did you have any interaction with him when you were working on the conversions?

JT: Not at all. I was given the graphics files and the background maps and all the sprites, but that was it as far as the games were concerned. It was simply

> "The Konix had a good processor and great graphical capabilities, so it was really interesting to develop for it"



» John was a bit of a pinball wizard in his university days, but he found fame developing videogames.

*NUMBER CRUNCHING

John worked on **1** game while he was at CRL

Including remixes, there have been **5** Last Ninja games

John tweaked the PC version of Putty Squad to run at **30** frames per second

The original Last Ninja was released in **1987**

Last Ninja 2 scored an impressive **94%**

Conversely, the Amiga version of Last Ninja 3 scored **80%** in Amiga Power

John spent a total of **2** years working on The Last Ninja Returns

John's first conversion for Virgin was released in **1993**

Mob Rule is set in the **1930s**

John received a Commodore PET when he was **16**

3 people formed Vivid Image: John Twiddy, Hugh Riley and Mev Dinc



» [Amiga] *Cool Spot* was one of three Shiny games that John ended up converting to the Amiga for Virgin.

a matter of interpreting that data and making a game on the Amiga from it. In some respects, all the layouts, where the platforms were, how the system worked as far as moving things around was all pretty much defined. It was all set up with a solid map editor, making it very easy to port the data to another format.

RG: So how long would these conversions usually take, John?

JT: Not too long at all really. I would have thought it would have been around three to four months from start to finish. Obviously a lot of things had to be redone graphics-wise, but with all the games being platform-based it was very easy to modify the code so that it would work on the next one. You just changed the graphics.

RG: You say you were happy working on these conversions, but was there any part of you that was thinking, "This is great and all, but I wish I was making my own stuff"?

JT: Well you're emulating people's work, and although I know you're effectively copying ideas, you're still putting your own little flair into the game by making specific use of the hardware. For me that's where the challenge and eventual satisfaction came from and I still had a lot of flexibility. I would approach Virgin and explain that I'd like to do certain things in a different way and they were quite happy with that.

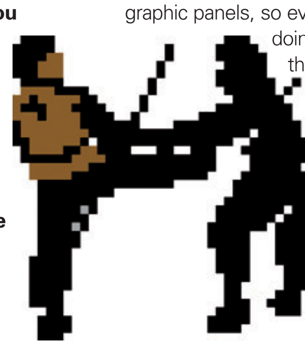
RG: So why did you go back to System 3 after Virgin?

JT: I hadn't moved away when I had been working at Virgin and I was still relatively close to where Mark was. I was still obviously in touch with him as well and therefore he asked me to come back. After *Aladdin* it seemed like the right time. It was partly influenced by the fact that I had worked on a similar style of games and had an engine built that was perfect for them. So when Mark said he wanted to do what would eventually become *Putty Squad*, that sounded like a very easy thing to do.

RG: So Mark is obviously a good friend of yours as opposed to just your boss?

JT: Yes. I first met him back in '86, so I've now known him a very long time.

RG: One of the projects you worked on when you went back to System 3 was *Constructor*, which was on the PC. So again there's this period where you're effectively moving up to another generation of machine and I'd imagine this is where you started becoming more involved with 3D graphics. So how was that?



JT: Well obviously there was quite a dramatic difference, as up to that point I had always worked on projects where it was me as the main programmer, one graphic artist and one musician. By this stage, however, System 3 was quite large and they had a large number of artists working on the game, which was actually quite a nice situation, because you could come up with any number of ideas and they would craft it very quickly. In that respect it was quite an interesting time, because it was my first experience of a large team and the resources that a large team can create.

RG: So how did you find the move from traditional 2D sprites to 3D polygons?

JT: To be honest, my transition to 3D graphics actually took quite a long time. After I did *Putty Squad* I worked on *Constructor*, which was isometric like *The Last Ninja* and all the graphics were 2D sprites, while all the backgrounds were composited graphic panels, so even then I wasn't doing anything 3D. I then moved on to *Street Wars* and *Mob Rule* and again they were games that were just using 2D graphics. So it wasn't really until 1999 that I started having to deal

with 3D. Obviously the graphics artists were using 3D tools to create all the buildings in *Constructor*, as they were all fully rendered so we could have the fly-arounds and other graphical tricks, but effectively they were rendered out and touched up by hand. As far as programming 3D, that wasn't until I started working on *The Last Ninja Returns* on the PC.

RG: Quickly staying with *Constructor*, what was it like working on a game with online play?

JT: It was fun. Obviously it was the first time I've ever done something like that and it was quite a complicated thing to grasp, especially in those days, when you're learning on your own (I was the only programmer working on it.) *Constructor* took something like 18 months from start to finish, primarily because of the premise, which was a huge difference to earlier games as you were only working on them for three or four months.

RG: How does it feel when something takes that long to finish? Does it begin to take a toll on you?

JT: There are times when you switch the computer on and you're looking at the same thing every day and you do think, "Oh God, it's never going to end." But you're always working on different routines and objectives, so while it's taking a long time, it's only really the publishers that worry about it. The developer is just far more engrossed in what they're doing and you're trying to tackle the small tasks that end up rewarding you anyway.

RG: You told me earlier how *The Last Ninja Returns* was going to be co-published by EA?

JT: That's right, there was effectively going to be a co-publishing deal with EA for it.

RG: So what were your plans for the game?

JT: Ever since the success of the first games, Mark had always wanted to make a sequel. Everyone looks fondly back at *The Last Ninja* – with rose-tinted spectacles in my mind – but because so many years had gone by since the originals, we knew we had to get it up to the standards of what was now coming out. Therefore we had to make it a full 3D adventure and began using motion capture and we created this huge 3D landscape to work with. The problem was that there were so many ninja-styled games coming out, that every time we saw a new one we were like, "Right we have to make sure ours is better than this. We have to have better camera movements, better interaction, better object manipulation, better fighting and so on." I thought the game was looking quite nice, but ultimately we were always playing catch-up against the other games that were coming out. I probably spent two years working on that, but then we decided that we had to drop it, because it was nearly there, but always not quite. Mark always had this vision of creating the best version of it and it was never quite there.

RG: Is there code for the game still lying around?

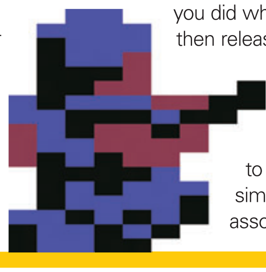
JT: Oh yes it's definitely there. Because I was new to 3D programming, it was quite fortuitous that Renderware was around at the same time and therefore I could use it in order to give me a kick-start on the 3D side of things. The code still exists. I haven't rooted it out, but it's definitely still somewhere.

RG: So before we move on, what did you have planned for the game?

JT: It was very different and we'd tried to make it as flexible as possible. You had a very sophisticated camera movement, there were fly-arounds as you were introduced to new scenes and levels. You had a huge variety of different cameras, which would shift depending on what you were doing. It was quite magical. You had the ability to take people's souls and take over them in order to access new levels and get past certain guards in order to save villagers and others who had been captured.

RG: Along with System 3, there's also the Play It range that contains a lot of localisation requirement. How does this compare to normal programming?

JT: It's actually much simpler. At the end of the day the game itself is already finished, so all you're really involved with is making sure it works on a PAL TV system and adding English, French, German and Spanish, so it's quite straightforward now. One of the most interesting ones I worked on though was the Korean translation of *Constructor*. I had no idea of how the construction of the Korean language is written, so I remember having some very interesting conversations with the Korean distributors [laughs].



> “In some respects, going to work for Virgin was something of a relief”

RG: So once you start dealing with other publishers, do you find that there's a lot of red tape to wade through?

JT: Oh yes. Games have gotten so much more complicated just in terms of the submission processes through Nintendo and Sony. Back in the early days it was very much a matter of you did what you wanted and then released it. Nowadays Sony and Nintendo have their own strict requirements that you have to adhere to and the red tape, and similarly the deadlines are associated with that and are much more important to keep to.

RG: So how would you say the industry has changed?

JT: The quality of the machines means that games can now be near perfect reality, but unfortunately that in itself brings so many complexities to the table. Back in the old days, you could have a simple background and a few simple things happening on-screen and the player could use their imagination. Nowadays though, you have to do everything perfectly and as soon as you start trying to match real life you then open the door to other complexities. Another thing to take into account is that real life isn't always fun, so something you're trying to emulate might not work as well from a gameplay point of view.

RG: So do you have any of the new machines?

JT: Yes, I have a PS3, Wii and DS.

RG: So what do you think of the new systems?

JT: Great. I think the industry has moved on massively, and I think it's for the better. Things like the Nintendo Wii and the DS I particularly like because of the input methods and the approach Nintendo has taken. So the opportunity that gives you as a programmer is great.

RG: What do you think about Nintendo, where they've pretty much opened up gaming to a totally new audience?

JT: It's crazy. In terms of the number of people you see on the tube playing with their DSes, it's no longer just the small kids, it's now smartly dressed business women playing their *Sudokus* or the *Brain Trainings* and it's become socially acceptable. You're no longer a geek if you're playing your console in public.

RG: One thing we've noticed while looking around the office is that there's a hell of a lot of pinball machines here. Is this an obsession of Mark's, or do you enjoy using them as well?

JT: [Laughs] It's an obsession of Mark's. Obviously I grew up with pinball tables and would always be playing on them in the arcades and at university, but the obsessive number of tables currently here is purely down to Mark.

RG: *Gottlieb Pinball* that you worked on must have been a success as you're now finishing off a sequel. Were you surprised by its sales as it ended up on quite a few systems?

JT: Yes. At the end of the day it was a really playable game and the beauty of it was that you could dive in and have a quick game or you could play it for hours. It also helped that it was really suited to the formats it appeared on.

RG: Before we go, you recently lost a very good friend, Tim Best, who you've worked with for a very long time at System 3. Would it be okay to share your thoughts about him?

JT: I've known Tim ever since I was at System 3, as he used to work as the storyboarder and games designer when I first came down to work on *The Last Ninja*. Tim was very involved in the process, and he was always the life and soul of any activity. He was my best man when I got married and it was a tremendous shock when he died just before Christmas. It was totally unexpected and makes you look back at your life and makes you realise just how long you had actually known him. We used to live next door to each other and I've lost count of the number of times we'd have game design discussions around each other's houses. It's very sad and I really miss him.

>> [C64] *Ikari Warriors* was a fantastic conversion by John, before he was snapped up by System 3.





>> [C64] It wouldn't be right to have an article on John Twiddy and not feature at least one caption for *The Last Ninja*.



>> [SNES] We're hoping System 3 makes *Putty Squad* available on its website. Best keep those fingers crossed.

YOU ASK THE QUESTIONS

Since he's created so many great games, it was inevitable that our readers would have their own probing questions for John. Here are just a few of them…

Pretend you are in the school playground: Who wins the "C64/ ZX Spectrum/CPC is the best" argument in your opinion?
No questions, C64 any day!

How was it moving to a more creative role within System 3?
Actually that was quite difficult, because you're always in this situation where you would think how you would have programmed something and it gets especially frustrating when you're sitting over the shoulder of a programmer and deadline is looming and you just want to move them away from the keyboard. At at the end of the day though it's someone else's project, so you have to learn to let it go.



How about bringing *Putty Squad* out on the DS?
I have to say, when you look back at it now we could have done a lot more in terms of the ability to stretch the character and morph it into other objects. The ability to use the stylus to push Putty in different directions would be great. It's certainly got potential.

Who is your favourite Doctor Who?
Definitely David Tennant

Would you make any changes to the games you worked on if you could go back and do it?
I am lucky that I have never had to work to a particular deadline and therefore, usually I have done all the bits I wanted to in a game.

Do you feel smug having converted Ikari Warriors to a better standard than Chris Butler's Commando?
I really enjoyed writing Ikari Warriors because I had a sit down table in my student flat in Newcastle so I prided myself on getting all the details right. It also relatively took a long time.

Many Amiga owners played the demo, but why do you think there's still so much interest in *Putty Squad*?
I suppose it's one of those things where you've seen it, it's tantalisingly close and it therefore becomes one of those things of myth. You begin to wonder if the full product actually still exists and people become interested in it for that reason. We produced a covermount version, which was literally just a few of the levels, but it's a real pity that it wasn't able to come out at the time.

How did you come up with the Cyberload system?
In the early days, the loading systems were tortuously slow, so I developed my own. It started with me writing "Dismon" whilst I was at university which was an assembler/ disassembler.

How does it feel knowing that people are still enjoying games like *The Last Ninja* on Virtual Console?
It's actually very weird. There are times when I think to myself, "Is it just nostalgia, or are people enjoying them just as much as they did back in the day?" I recently downloaded *The Last Ninja* off the VC and I just thought, "This is so difficult to control." At the time it was easy, but I look back at it and think, "Oh my God, how could anyone play it?"



CLASSIC GAMING ON A BUDGET

CHEAP AS CHIPS



If there's one thing we've learned about retro gaming, it's that your money can stretch an amazingly long way if you actually want it to. Granted, a mint copy of *Radiant Silvergun* is going to cost you a small fortune, but there are plenty of other worthy titles that can picked up for less than a fiver…

BLASTER MASTER

- **SYSTEM:** NES
- **RELEASED:** 1988
- **PUBLISHER:** SUNSOFT
- **DEVELOPER:** SUNSOFT



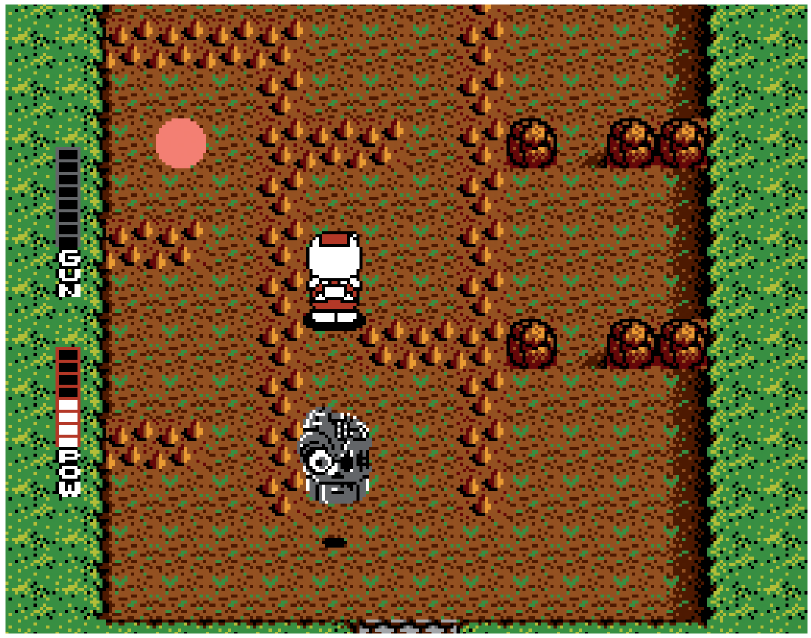
Developed by Sunsoft, and making up a series of five games, the *Blaster Master* franchise has appeared on various consoles over the years. It's a series that, in our opinion, marks Sunsoft's finest hour, and yet it failed to find the plaudits and recognition it deserved on its release.

Blaster Master has since become a bit of a cult classic on the NES, so you'd be probably expecting to pay a princely penalty for the privilege of playing it today. Thankfully, this isn't the case. But before we start telling you why *Blaster Master* is worth your loose change, we should really warn you that it has possibly one of the most bizarre introductions to a videogame. We're introduced to our hero, a young boy called Jason, staring at his pet frog, Fred, who is cooped up inside a small glass jar. Understandably miffed by his imprisonment, and wanting to frolic in the undergrowth with his pals, Fred breaks free, escapes the house and touches a crate of radioactive waste lying on the boy's front lawn. It's then that gigantism begins take a hold of the frog, before it escapes by hopping down a giant hole in the front garden. Witnessing this, Jason decides to drop down the same hole and it's here he finds a Bomberman suit, and a vehicle called a SOPHIA (no, we don't know what it stands for either).

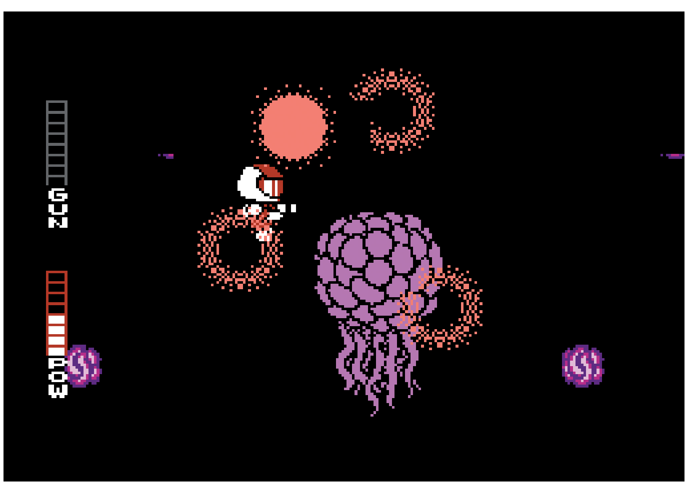
Bemused, we're left to leaf through the game's manual to help fill in the gaps, and it's there it's revealed to us that our actual mission is to kill the Evil Plutonium Boss (who probably had something to do with that nasty crate of radioactive filth that is being dropped on people's lawns and causing frogs to grow in size). And so, everything cleared up and that bizarre intro out the way, it's now time to settle into the real brilliance of the game.

Blaster Master is a run-and-gun game with a difference: its action requires the player to continually flit between two different gameplay modes on the fly. The first finds you driving, jumping and blasting through hordes of mutant enemies through plenty of gloomy-looking outdoorsy surroundings; and the second section of the game takes the form of a top-down shooter where you control a stubby-looking version of Jason in levels with the perspective and aesthetics of a *Bomberman* game. As well as boasting some fantastic visuals and some astonishing sounds, *Blaster Master*'s real charm lies in the whole vehicle/player mechanic, which works brilliantly. During the game, Jason is frequently called on to go it alone on foot to access areas that the SOPHIA vehicle is just too large to reach. This adds a simple but really effective puzzle element to the gameplay as progression relies on getting Jason to reach the overhead areas, killing the mutated plutonium-pumped bosses and unlocking additional powers to kit out the SOPHIA and progress through the game.

You'll find it difficult to not be impressed by the ambition of *Blaster Master*. With so much variety, character and challenge in the game, it's an underdog NES classic that's worth a few quid any day of the week.



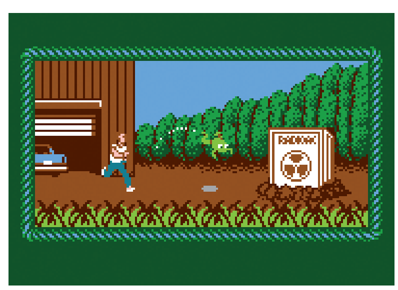
» [NES] The game viewed through 'Bomberman vision', which happens whenever Jason steps through any of the doors in the main game.



» [NES] There are a surprising number of grotesque uglies to be found in the game. This boss here fits that bill quite nicely.



» [NES] During the game, the SOPHIA vehicle can be fitted with various upgrades to help aid Jason in his quest.



» [NES] A section of the game's intro, which explains the dangers of putting a boy, a frog and a box of plutonium together.

BOSS/RUSH

WHERE WE SQUARE OFF AGAINST THAT END-OF-LEVEL BADDIE FROM YESTERYEAR…

DOCTOR ROBOTNIK



GAME INFO



- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** MEGA DRIVE
- » **RELEASED:** 1991
- » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- » **DEVELOPER:** SEGA



» [Dreamcast] *Sonic R* was the first time Sonic fans got to play as Doctor Robotnik, but *Sonic Adventure 2* was the first time in the platform series of games.



» [Mega Drive] The Egg-O-Matic is Robotnik's main mode of transportation; it's kind of like a futuristic version of those motorised buggies you see burger chasers using.

Sega certainly went around the houses in its bid to find a mascot for the Mega Drive. For those unfamiliar with the tale, during those many mascot brainstorming sessions many ideas were put forward by the internal teams at Sega as to what animal, vegetable or mineral should try and steer the Mega Drive to 16-bit victory. Among the ideas put forward was a rabbit with punching ears, various anthropomorphic animals and a character based on Theodore Roosevelt – the 26th president of the United States, just in case you're wondering. The idea of a Roosevelt character was that the mustachioed president would make a great mustachioed rival to Nintendo's mustachioed plumber, with the thinking being that it was the moustache that had something crucial to Mario's overall appeal. And so the idea went forward until a plucky blue hedgehog wearing Michael Jackson-style sneakers was pitched, selected by the bigwigs and then went on to make Sega a humongous pile of money.

Deftly, Sega chose not to throw the baby out with the bath water and kept many of those original concepts and ideas, choosing to work them into its IP portfolio elsewhere. The rabbit with extendable boxing ears was later reworked into the character Ristar, and the Theodore Roosevelt idea was adapted into an arch nemesis for Sonic, called Doctor Eggman (or Doctor Robotnik as he was renamed in Europe), who would go on to be as iconic as the hero himself.

The gaming world was first introduced to Dr Robotnik – full name Doctor Ivo 'Eggman' Robotnik – in *Sonic The Hedgehog* on the Mega Drive. Robotnik's rotund egg-shaped frame, ringmaster-like attire and all-important moustache actually give him the look of a silent-movie screen villain, making his wickedness identifiable and timeless.

But Sega cleverly juxtaposed Robotnik's old-school characteristics, while filling the Lex Luthor/Superman-esque power and agility gap that existed between this hero and villain, by turning him into a skilled inventor and sticking him inside various inventions which worked as the game's end-of-zone bosses. Robotnik's most iconic inventions in the series have been his Egg-O-Matic, a small egg-shaped flying vessel he uses to get around, and his ambitious Death Star-style base, the Death Egg, which he is busy constructing in *Sonic 2*.

Sonic and Robotnik's hatred for one another has softened over the years, though, with the two memorably working together in the finales of *Sonic Adventure 1* and *2* and *Sonic The Hedgehog* on the Xbox 360. However, this truce was short-lived, with the two rivals back at each other's throats again in more recent *Sonic* titles.

Despite Robotnik's many foiled attempts at stopping Sonic, he admirably dusts himself off, gets back on that horse and continues on with a strong doggedness with nary a dent in his confidence. Perhaps it's his never-quit attitude that many find so endearing about the character: the fact that you know his plans are doomed for failure the second you pick up that joypad… or perhaps it does has something to do with that moustache of his?

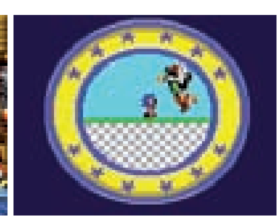
PERHAPS IT'S HIS NEVER-QUIT ATTITUDE THAT MANY FIND SO ENDEARING ABOUT THE CHARACTER… THAT YOU KNOW HIS PLANS ARE DOOMED FOR FAILURE



» [Mega Drive] The Doc even got his own *Puyo Puyo*-style puzzle game with the release of the ace *Mean Bean Machine*.



» [Mega Drive] *Sonic 2* finds Robotnik busy trying to build the Death Egg, a Death Star-like base with which to squish pesky Sonic.



» (SMS) Robotnik kidnaps Tails in the intro of *Sonic 2* on the SMS, marking the Fox's first appearance in the series.



DEMON'S CREST

HE MAY BE THE DEVIL'S SPAWN BUT DON'T HOLD THAT AGAINST HIM!



- **PUBLISHER:** CAPCOM
- **RELEASED:** 1994
- **GENRE:** ADVENTURE
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** SNES
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5



HISTORY

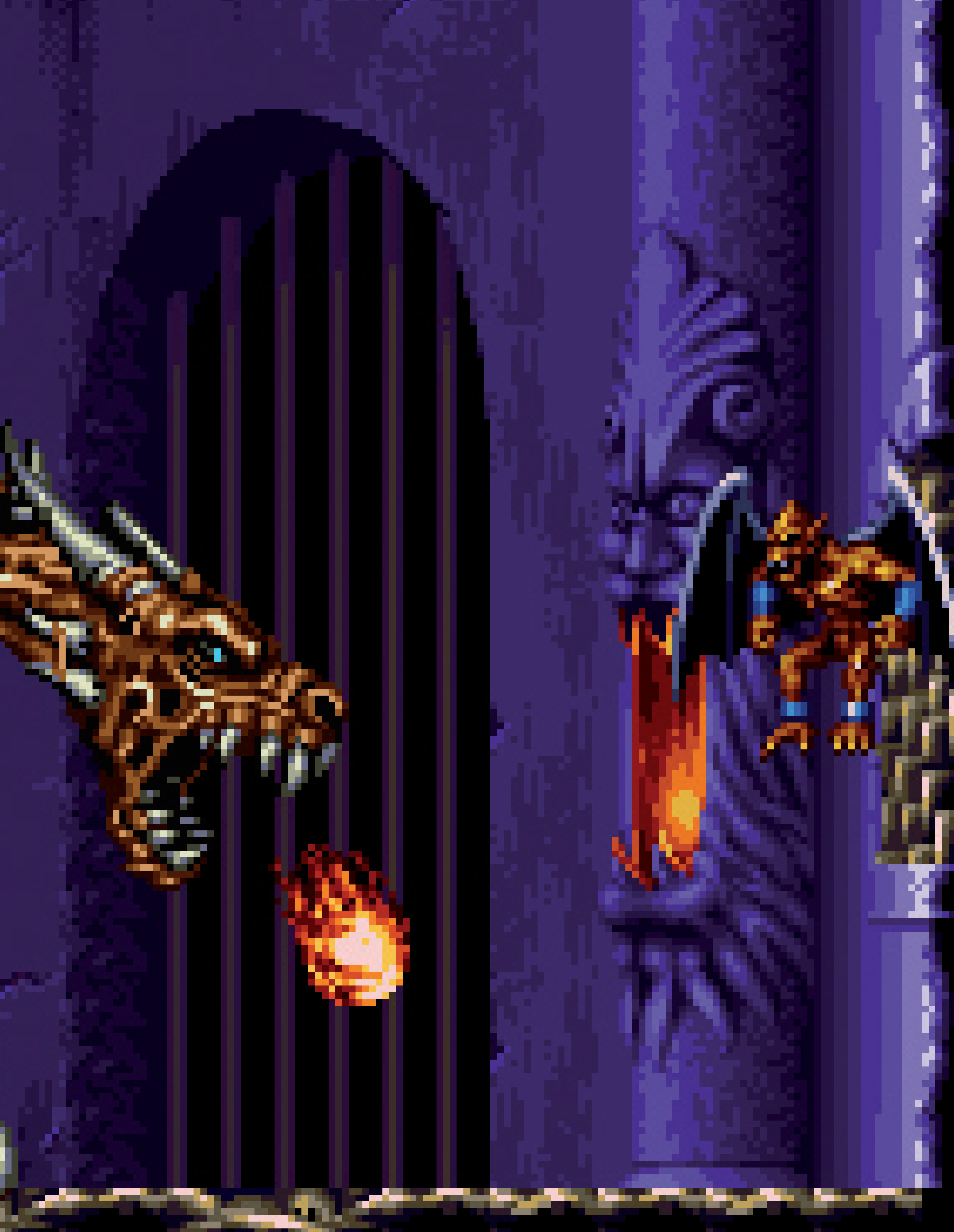
Red Arremers is the collective term given to the annoying red demons that stalked poor Arthur through his many quests to save his fair maiden, Princess Prin Prin, in the *Ghosts 'N Goblins* series. Realising that these testing imps were proving to be popular with many fans, Capcom decided to pluck one lucky Arremer out of obscurity and give him his very own videogame series… and we're very glad it did.

The *Gargoyles Quest* trilogy follows the exploits of one likeable Arremer called Firebrand. Beginning on the Game Boy in 1990, with *Gargoyles Quest*, all three titles that this hot-headed scamp appeared in were side-scrolling action platformers but with a RPG slant.

Perhaps expectably (given the game's pedigree), the majority of the action in *Demon's Crest* plays very similar to *Ghouls 'N Ghosts* but mixed with a dash of *Castlevania*. Beginning with a memorable boss battle against a giant fire-spewing dragon, which would probably look more at home loitering around the end of the game than its start, *Demon's Crest* grabs you by the lapels and doesn't let go. From the game's epic introduction to the wonderful Mode 7 game map that finds Firebrand flying to the numerous levels, the game feels wonderfully polished throughout.

Firebrand himself also boasts a far bigger move repertoire than his knightly counterpart. He can fly, cling to and scale walls and even borrow the powers of his fallen foes through the collection of the titular Demon Crests which allow Firebrand to morph into other gargoyles. But while *Demon's Crest* is crammed full of elements that you've probably seen before in other videogames, the game can be forgiven as Capcom does such a great job of meshing everything together.

If you've yet to experience the delights of *Demon's Crest*, we urge you to seek it out. It's one of the most lavish and enjoyable action platformers on the Super Nintendo, and isn't as devilish as the usual crop of Capcom games… despite what its name suggests.



THE 10 BEST TETRIS GAMES *you've never heard of*

Stuart Campbell sees geometric blocks wherever he looks. Then again, perhaps he shouldn't live in a house made of Lego

Viewers, you can't even begin to imagine how many *Tetris* games there have been. I've spent a long time researching the series for a possible Definitive, until I realised that we'd need to devote an entire issue of Retro Gamer to do the job properly. Not counting spin-offs and 'sequels' like *Welltris*, *Hatris*, *Faces* (*Tris 3*) and the like, there are well over SIXTY distinct, official *Tetris* games, and pretty much every single one of them has a unique or significantly different feature worth writing about.

Almost nothing about *Tetris* is standard, in fact, from the complex, controversial and always-changing rules about moving and rotating blocks after landing, to more basic things like the scoring and even the axis of rotation. (For example, in most recent iterations rotating an I-block twice will move it horizontally one position, as it rotates around one particular square – rotating it twice more will return it to the original horizontal position. In the Game Boy version that's still most people's benchmark for *Tetris*, though rotating it twice will leave its horizontal position unchanged, as it rotates around its actual geometric centre.)

So instead of telling the entire epic story, I've picked out ten *Tetris*es from the crowd that you've probably never heard of, and which are all the best in one particular aspect. Have a go at all the games in this little sampler and you'll see just how much it's possible to change the seemingly simplest of designs and still end up with something that's unmistakeably *Tetris*. And you just might fall in love with it all over again, too.

TETRIS – JAPANESE VERSION

■ **SYSTEM:**SHARP X68000 ■ **YEAR:**1988 ■ **BEST FOR:**MESSING WITH YOUR MIND

10

WE'RE GOING TO start off with a fairly straightforward port, in order to illustrate just how weird even a standard rendition of ordinary vanilla *Tetris* can be. The conversion for the Sharp X68000 Japanese computer is almost identical in structure to the normal mode of the classic Game Boy version – ten speeds, six levels of junk. After that, though, it starts to get freaky. For a start, you have lives, and a strange scoring system by which you only get points when you clear a level or die.

The remarkable standout feature of *TJV*, though, is the control system. The X68K had a two-button joystick, but BOTH buttons are used for instant drop, with the rotate control being Down. (Up hides/unhides the next block, there's no fast-drop at all, and there are no keyboard controls.) It's all but impossible to get your head round this in play, meaning you constantly have to concentrate incredibly hard on remembering not to insta-drop a block instead of rotate it – on top of figuring out what you actually want to do with it – which turns this version of *Tetris* into a unique feat of skill akin to patting your head and rubbing your tummy at the same time.



» [Sharp X68000] This is what happens when you put rotate on the Down direction and fast-drop on the fire buttons.

If you want to see where *Tetris – Japanese Version* ended up, check out the 1994 Japan-only SNES release *Super Tetris 3*, which used the exact same lives and scoring system (albeit without the confusing controls), and also added some interesting new variants in the form of Sparkliss, the four-player Familiss and the deeply weird Magicaliss. Do NOT check out the Japan-only SNES release *Super Tetris 2*, which not only has no similarities to *Super Tetris 3* or *TJV*, but is also not in any way related to either of the other two *Super Tetris* games we're going to cover in this feature, which are also totally unconnected to *Super Tetris 3*. Nurse! The headaches have started again!

"A unique feat of skill akin to patting your head and rubbing your tummy"

» [PC] If you've messed up this badly on the two-block level, seek medical help immediately – you've almost certainly had a stroke.



KIDS TETRIS

■ **SYSTEM:**PC ■ **YEAR:**1999 ■ **BEST FOR:**PLAYING ONE-HANDED

09

IF YOU'RE A bit shell-shocked after *Tetris – Japanese Version*, or if you've just got a hangover, you might find yourself hankering after something a bit less demanding. If so, then *Kids Tetris* is the game for you. Aimed at children (the clue's in the name!), the friendly, brightly coloured game introduces the *Tetris* concept in the gentlest way possible – the opening levels are entirely comprised of blocks made up of just TWO squares (making a mockery of the 'Tetr-' part of the name, but let's not be churlish this early on), falling into a pit just five squares wide and ten high, a quarter of the usual size.

Clearly, it's very nearly physically impossible to mess up a game of *Kids Tetris*, even if you're playing it with the mouse controls that are another feature of this version. So you can relax and enjoy the encouraging commentary and admire the interactive features, which are revealed on the backdrops of the four different levels as you play. Things do ramp up as you go along, introducing three-square blocks and finally the classic Tetriminoes we all know and love, but by then you should probably be able to handle it.

THE 10 BEST TETRIS GAMES *you've never heard of*



» [Master System] For some unfathomable reason, *Super Tetris* also has continues.

SUPER TETRIS

■ **SYSTEM:**MASTER SYSTEM ■ **YEAR:**1989
■ **BEST FOR:**SUPERHUMAN FEATS

08

THINK LIVES AND two-block Tetriminoes are weird things to have in a *Tetris* game? How about smart bombs, then? That's the scarcely believable unique feature of the Master System version, which is in most other respects a pretty by-the-book port. You get one smart bomb (in the shape of a little heart) when you start the game; when triggered, it wipes out every block in the pit. Every time you make 25 lines, the pit clears and you get a bonus smart bomb (though the supply dries up by 100 lines). Annoyingly, the smart bomb is mapped to one of the fire buttons (rather than, say, the unused Up on the D-pad) and that means you can only rotate in one direction, which can make some types of move effectively impossible on the fastest stages like Level 29.

The other intriguing aspect of *Super Tetris* is that you get the exact same blocks in the same order in every single game, which would make it theoretically possible to memorise the entire sequence – like one of those guys who can remember pi to a million decimal places or track a four-deck Blackjack game in their heads – to play a perfect game. In a better world, there'd be government grants for that kind of thing.

TETRIS ELEMENTS

■ **SYSTEM:**PC ■ **YEAR:**2004 ■ **BEST FOR:**VARIATIONS

07

***ELEMENTS* IS PROBABLY** the least obscure title in this feature, though it's still very little-known. If the games we've covered so far have all been interesting in their own ways but perhaps a little staid, this is *Tetris* delving into its fancy-dress box for a party and really letting its hair down. In addition to the standard game, here you get variants themed on the elements, here represented as Fire, Tempest, Ice, Earthquake and Stratosphere. Each has its own radically different set of rules – Stratosphere, for example, features asteroids which can be introduced into the pit by performing certain tasks, and which you can keep bouncing around destroying blocks until they escape off the bottom of the grid.

Fire, meanwhile, lets you 'superheat blocks by fast-dropping them – clearing lines of superheated blocks causes explosions which eliminate others – whereas Tempest sees you playing two separate pits which swap over from time to time in the wind and Earthquake is a 'Cascade'-rules variant which afflicts the pit (sadly too rarely) with catastrophic tremors that turn your nicely ordered grid into a mess of hard-to-clear debris.

The best *Elements* variant, though, is Ice, which uses just two simple new rules to create very deep play, based around icicles that fall from the top of the pit and can smash blocks right down through the grid and into spaces below the bricks. It's both arcadey and thoughtful, and an ingenious tweak that builds on the *Tetris* formula without overwhelming it.

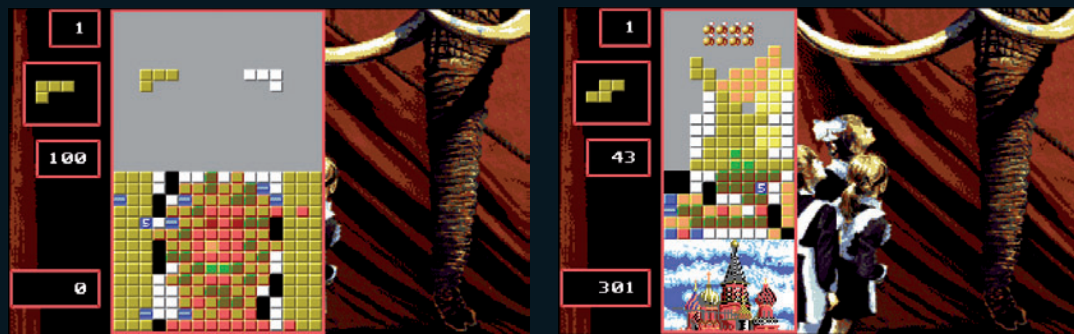


» [PC] Here we see a snappily named 'Breakthrumino Meteor' ricocheting around the play-field. You can deflect it with the falling L block.

your name's not down, you're not coming in

In a desperate attempt to make some sort of coherent sense and whittle down the incomprehensible vastness of the subject to something more manageable, we've applied strict selection criteria to the games featured in this list. The first rule, obviously, is that only official licensed *Tetris* games count. Secondly, mobile phone versions are out, because there are roughly 17 trillion of them, and most of the interesting ones (like the *Tetris Mission* titles) are Japanese only and can't be played unless you have a Japanese phone and/or network contract, which is taking importing a touch too far. And thirdly, only traditional-style *Tetris* games, based around blocks falling into a 2D pit, are eligible, so excellent updates like the N64's *Tetrisphere* are out too. Who knows, maybe one day Darran will commission 'The 10 Best Tetris Spin-Offs You've Never Heard Of', or 'The 10 Best 3D Tetrises' or 'The 10 Best iPhone Tetrises'. We can but dream.

06



» [Amiga] Fantastically, in the competitive two-player game you can also use your bombs to destroy your opponent's pieces as they fall.

SUPER TETRIS

SYSTEM:AMIGA **YEAR:**1991 **BEST FOR:**NEW CORE RULES

RG READERS FAMILIAR with the 'Definitive' series probably won't be all that surprised to discover that the Amiga (and PC) release going by the name of *Super Tetris* is a completely new and totally different game bearing no resemblance at all to the Master System one at No.8, and precious few to any other *Tetris* either. The core gameplay concept here has been radically changed. You're given a junk-filled pit and a limited number of Tetriminoes to drop; when you run out, it's game over unless you've replenished your supply by clearing lines or eliminating the numbered blocks in the grid which give you 5, 10 or 15 bonus pieces. (There are other types of power-up block, too.)

Every time you clear a line, you also get a bonus piece made up entirely of bombs (the number dependent on the number of lines cleared), which can be rotated and moved like a normal piece in order to get rid of problem blocks (each bomb takes out one block individually). A picture also moves up from the bottom of the pit with each line; when it's completely revealed, you move onto the next level. Finally, *Super Tetris* also boasts novel features like co-operative and competitive two-player games played on a double-width grid, and apart from stupidly non-definable controls putting rotate on the Up arrow, this is an imaginative and fun reworking.

TETRIS ZONE

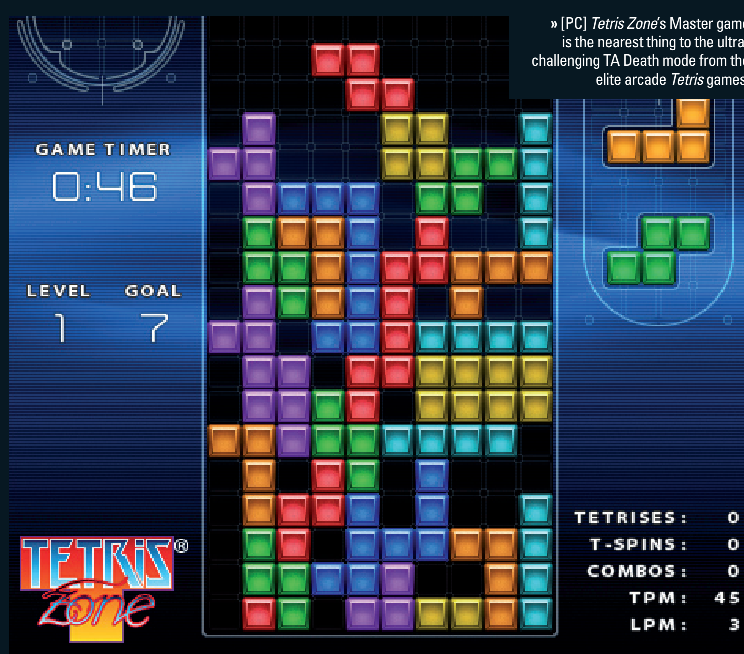
SYSTEM:PC **YEAR:**2008 **BEST FOR:**GOING PROFESSIONAL

05

THE MOST RECENT 'mainstream' version of *Tetris* slipped out last year with very little fanfare, and perhaps understandably so since it's mostly another fairly basic port, featuring the now-standard modes of 'Marathon' game, 10-minute time-attack Challenge and 40-line Sprint. Slick, compact and pretty, it's just about the definitive modern version of the game, but it has two things that set it aside from the millions of others that didn't make it into our list. First is the online focus, with internet-only leaderboards to test yourself against, but it's not unique there – both *Tetris DS* and the official Facebook versions provide that function and more besides. (*Tetris Zone* has no Vs game, bizarrely.)

More exciting is *Tetris Zone*'s bridging of the two distinct worlds of *Tetris* that currently exist. On the one side you've got 'traditional' *Tetris*, the fairly sedate and simple game we've all known and loved since the Game Boy version, while on the other is the dizzyingly complex, hyper-elite *Tetris: The Grand Master* strain that's dominant in arcades. One of the most celebrated features of the *TGM* games is the 'TA Death' mode that debuted in *Tetris The Absolute The Grand Master 2 PLUS* (no I didn't make that up).

TA Death mode sets the game's 'gravity' to maximum from the beginning, meaning that pieces appear instantly at the bottom of the pit with no drop time at all, and *Tetris Zone* pinches the mode in the form of its Master game. *TZ*'s Master is currently the only legal and official way to play anything resembling TA Death mode in the home (albeit shorn of most of the grading complexities), so if you want to take the next step in advanced Tetrising but fancy getting some practice in before embarrassing yourself down the arcade – or just fancy seeing how the other half lives – give *Tetris Zone* a shot.



» [PC] *Tetris Zone*'s Master game is the nearest thing to the ultra-challenging TA Death mode from the elite arcade *Tetris* games.

THE 10 BEST TETRIS GAMES *you've never heard of*

TETRIS BATTLE GAIDEN

SYSTEM:SNES **YEAR:**1993 **BEST FOR:**VS GAMES

04

THE WEIRD THING about *Tetris – Japanese Version* back at No.10 is that, well, it isn't very Japanese. Where are the bright neon colours, super-deformed cartoon characters and twee, bouncy music? Obviously, they're all in here.

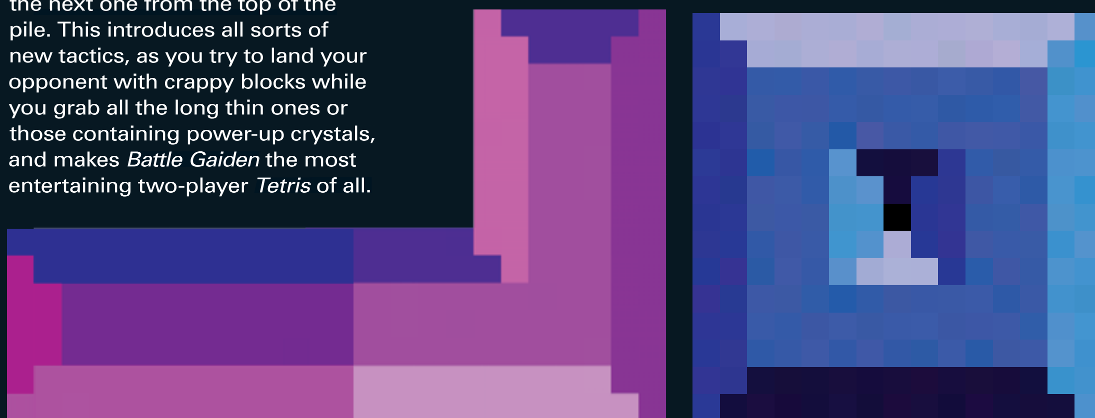
Tetris Battle Gaiden's unusual feature is that – as the name implies – it's all about the battling. There's no straight 1P game of any kind, just a head-to-head Vs fight. You pick one of eight characters and battle the rest (plus two bosses), and the objective is to send your opponent blocks by clearing multiple lines at once, but also to clear lines containing special crystals, which give you power-ups of varying strengths and types depending how many you collect. (Every character has their own set of special attacks.) You can play against either the CPU (in a story-mode format against all the other characters in any order) or a chum (no-nonsense punch-ups).

The other novel thing is that rather than both players being given the same pieces, here they share a common pool, with the first person to land their current block grabbing the next one from the top of the pile. This introduces all sorts of new tactics, as you try to land your opponent with crappy blocks while you grab all the long thin ones or those containing power-up crystals, and makes *Battle Gaiden* the most entertaining two-player *Tetris* of all.



» [SNES] Sometimes pretty things like this happen.





TETRIS THE GRAND MASTER 3: TERROR-INSTINCT

SYSTEM:ARCADE **YEAR:**2005 **BEST FOR:**ULTIMATE TETRIS

03

COIN-OP *TETRIS* IS now by far the most hardcore strain of the game. When Arika (a Japanese developer more famous for later *Street Fighter* titles and shmups like the scary *Ketsui Death Label*) took over the licence in 1998 with *Tetris: The Grand Master*, it set in motion a frightening chain of events which has led to players performing astonishing feats of advanced-level *Rain Man*-style autistic dexterity (have a look on YouTube) in versions of the game which would leave most casual *Tetris* fans whimpering and sobbing in a corner after about 60 seconds.

The *TGM* sub-series now numbers five games, the most recent being the Japan-only Xbox 360 title *Tetris: The Grand Master Ace*, all of which are built around the same basic template of finite levels, terrifying speed and an incredibly complex grading system obviously culminating in the exalted rank of Grand Master. (The *TGM* series focuses on skill and flair rather than endurance, so the maximum game length is about seven minutes but merely surviving that long doesn't guarantee you a good grading. See the wiki at www.tetrisconcept.com for the full labyrinthine details.) The one we're going to pick, though, is *Tetris The Grand Master 3: Terror-Instinct*, for two reasons.

One is that the only place you can play it is in an arcade, and probably a Japanese arcade at that. (The two preceding games, *The Absolute The Grand Master 2* and *TATGM2+*, were both playable in a single build of MAME before support was removed at Arika's request.) But the other reason is based on pure charm. The most insane feature of the later games in the *TGM* series is the credits sequence: when you undertake the 'Promotional Exam' to achieve Grand Master level, the last section is a credits sequence in which the blocks are INVISIBLE once they've landed. (Astoundingly, some people can still play the game this way, and should probably be killed before they evolve self-awareness and destroy us all.) But *Terror-Instinct* adds an altogether cuter twist – in the ultra-mental Shirase mode, the blocks in the credits sequence aren't invisible, but are formed from square brackets, in a touching tribute to the very first Tetris, written by Alexey Pajitnov on his Russian Elektronika-60 computer. Aw, bless. *TTGM3TI*'s other noteworthy feature is the inclusion of a 'Sakura' mode, which mimics the gameplay of something we'll be hearing more of very shortly.



» [Arcade] The word 'Easy' on the right is a bit of a lie.





» **(Top)** Pokémon shown in silhouette are ones that you haven't captured before.
» **(Above)** Five-unit blocks a-go-go.
» **(Right)** Don't worry – though *PST* wasn't released in any English-speaking country, the German version has an English-language option.

POKÉMON SHOCK TETRIS

SYSTEM: POKÉMON MINI **YEAR:** 2002 **BEST FOR:** CLASSIC GAMEBOY STYLE

02

TO BE HONEST, this incarnation for Nintendo's short-lived Pokémon Mini micro-handheld is my personal favourite *Tetris* ever, and probably the rarest/least-known version of all. While the tiny monochrome console was widely available and can be picked up for about a fiver, the game was only released in Japan and Germany – I had to have an ex-girlfriend from Munich trek across the latter country to buy me a second-hand copy from a total stranger.

Pokémon Shock Tetris in an extremely inventive updating that finally addresses some issues that have plagued *Tetris* since its inception, most notably the fact that when you get good at it, it just goes on and on and on without anything interesting happening. Here, Pokémon pop up at the side of the pit as you play, and if you can pull off a Tetris while they're there, you capture the Pokémon and add it to your Pokédex. This addition alone gives the game a major new dimension, constantly forcing the player to decide whether to clear blocks to keep the grid down or build a big funnel in readiness for when a new Pokémon shows up. (Unlike many more recent *Tetris*es, there's no Hold function for you to hang onto the long thin blocks until you need them.) It also hugely expands replay value, because there are always more Pokémon to capture and there's always a worthwhile goal to achieve if you only have five minutes to play.



But wait! There's more. At three of the four difficulty settings, *PST* gradually introduces five-square blocks (first seen in the Disney licence *Magical Tetris Challenge* on N64/GBA/PSone), with increasing frequency and in increasingly evil shapes – you'll really come to hate the giant L in particular – which also helps keep the game fresh in an extended session. That's still not the best thing, however.

The other problem with *Tetris* is that sometimes it just doesn't seem fair, particularly in iterations without the Hold function. There can be sequences of blocks which just don't give you a fighting chance, and if you get a long enough run of garbage you can lose through little fault of your own. (Unless you're one of the ungodly freaks seen in those *Grand Master* videos, of course.) But *Pokémon Shock Tetris* solves this program with a single stroke of sheer genius. Several years before the Wii or the iPhone were ever thought of, the Pokémon Mini came equipped with a built-in motion sensor, and if you give the console a little shake, the current piece will be flipped to its mirror image (for example, the S piece will become a Z piece and vice versa). This fantastic innovation means you no longer have an excuse for failure, and gives the game a whole new level of tactical depth, plus you never stop feeling clever as you give the Mini the deftest of flicks and completely alter the possibilities of any situation.

With several other Time Attack-type modes for a shorter game, and classic old-skool rotation rules, this is the most complete *Tetris* this side of *Tetris DS* and the most flat-out enjoyable one since the first time you saw the Space Shuttle take off on the Game Boy. It'll take a lot of effort to find a copy, but it's worth it.

THE 10 BEST TETRIS GAMES *you've never heard of*

TETRIS WITH CARD CAPTOR SAKURA: ETERNAL HEART

■ **SYSTEM:**PLAYSTATION ■ **YEAR:**2000 ■ **BEST FOR:**TRUE PUZZLE GAMING

01

THE TOP SPOT, though, goes to a game that RG readers can play relatively easily. This turn-of-the-millennium PS release is a tie-in with a popular Japanese cartoon which has spawned many videogames across a plethora of formats, but none as accessible to Western gamers. (Even this one is entirely in Japanese, but you'll figure out the menus fairly easily.)

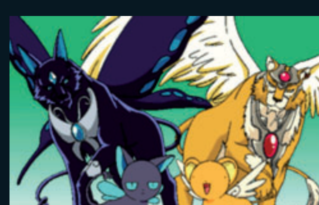
TWCCS:EH contains two modes, the first of which is a story game (with training and normal difficulty settings) based around the old 'remove particular target blocks to finish the level' routine commonly seen in more recent *Tetris*es and pioneered, I think, by *Dr Mario*. (The other mode is a seriously tonto Vs game very much along the lines of *Tetris Battle Gaiden*, offering CPU or human opponents and lots more hilarious power-ups – my favourite is the one that lifts the other player's entire stack, flips it over and dumps it back in the pit upside-down, but I'm also fond of the one that makes your opponent's Tetrimino change to a different one every time they press the rotate button.)

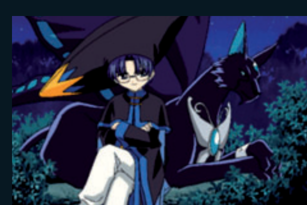
The central theme borrowed from the cartoon is tarot-type cards (they're supposedly from an ancient magic book), shown at the left of the screen obscured by *Tetris* blocks, and clearing the target blocks in the pit reveals the cards and completes the stage. It's not quite as simple as that, though, and *Eternal Heart* is always throwing new twists at you with each of its 18 levels. In one stage, the pile of blocks rotates on the vertical axis every time you drop four pieces, so that the L-shaped and Z-shaped blocks are now effectively the wrong way round. On another level, fat hamster things rain down over the screen, obscuring your view. In another, target blocks might not be in the pit when you start, but fall down as part of your own pieces. On yet another level, the pit is occupied by a pretty 'tree' of blocks whose trunk steadily grows, pushing the entire structure up from the bottom of the screen. One level starts with a clump of blocks in the pit not touching the bottom or sides, which occasionally colour-cycles so you can't see where the gaps are for several seconds. The last level sees two identical pits on screen, with one always in light and one in darkness, with the light switching every few seconds, which is surprisingly distracting. And so on.

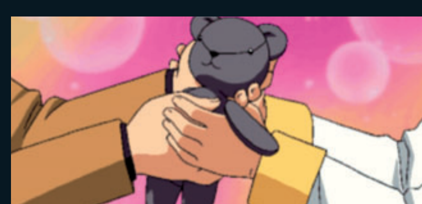
If you weren't getting the message yet, this isn't *Tetris* as you've ever seen it before. In fact, the revolutionary thing about *TWCCS: EH* is that it was *Tetris* reinvented for the first time (properly) as the thing people have always quite wrongly called it: a 'puzzle game'. (Normal *Tetris* is simply an abstract action game – it's no more a 'puzzle' than *Space Invaders* is.) Every time you tackle a stage you'll be given the same pieces in the same order, and your job is to figure out how to use them to beat the stage as quickly as possible (you have a pretty tight cumulative time limit to beat all 18 stages, and you can go back at any point and try to redo a completed stage faster to boost your clock). It's not random, and it will never beat you just by firing blocks at you at a ridiculous pace. This is *Tetris* as a thoughtful moving jigsaw puzzle rather than a frantic reaction test, and it's all the better for it. In fact, it's the best *Tetris* you've never heard of!

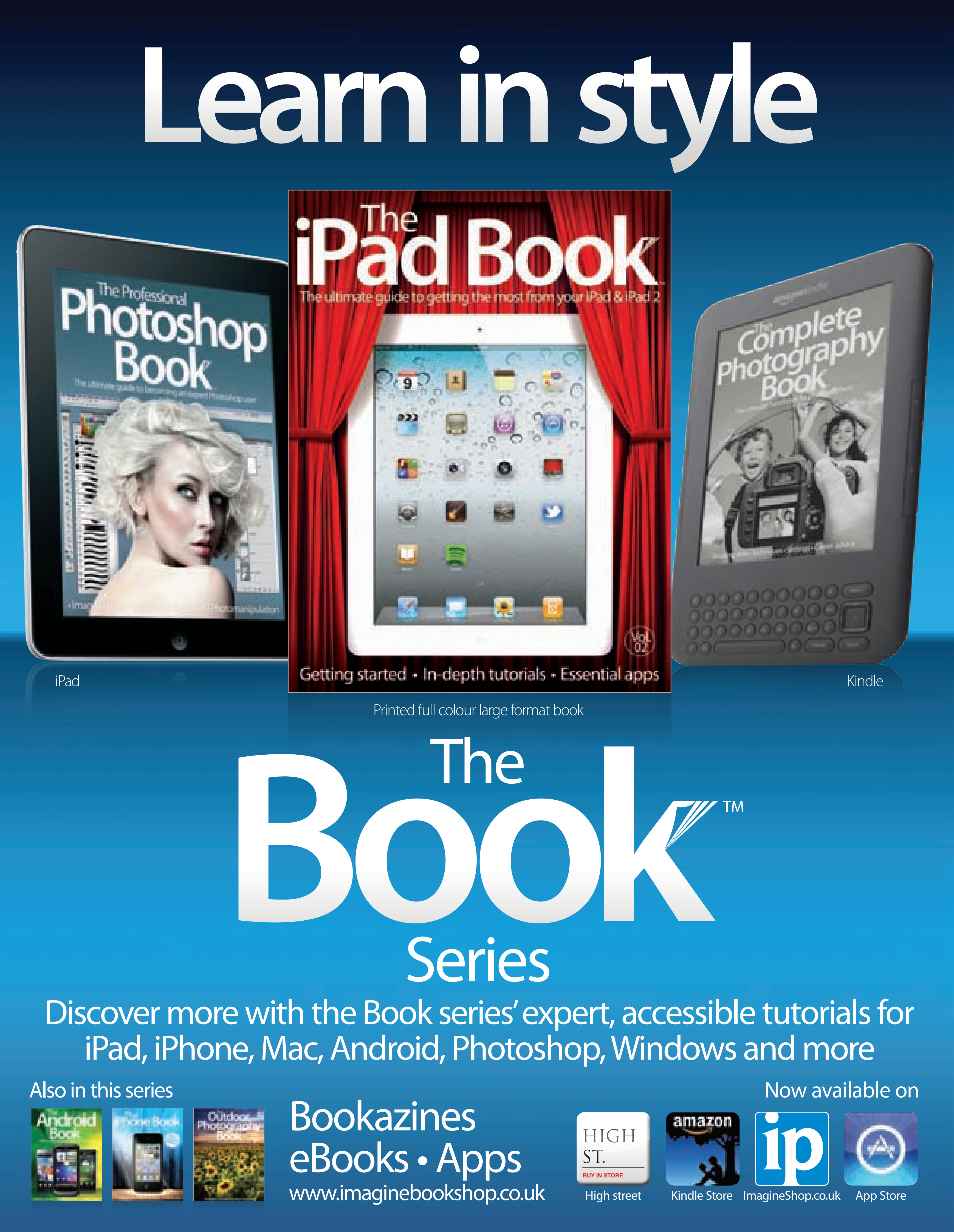


» [PlayStation] The gems you need to clear are right at the bottom, so you've got your work cut out.



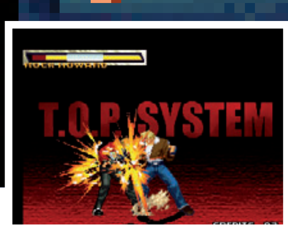





Learn in style
The Professional Photoshop Book
The ultimate guide to becoming an expert Photoshop user
The iPad Book
The ultimate guide to getting the most from your iPad & iPad 2
Vol. 02
Getting started • In-depth tutorials • Essential apps
The Complete Photography Book
iPad
Kindle
Printed full colour large format book
The Book™ Series
Discover more with the Book series' expert, accessible tutorials for iPad, iPhone, Mac, Android, Photoshop, Windows and more
Also in this series
Android Book
iPhone Book
Outdoor Photography Book
Bookazines
eBooks • Apps
www.imaginebookshop.co.uk
Now available on
HIGH ST.
BUY IN STORE
High street
amazon
Kindle Store
ip
ImagineShop.co.uk
App Store



The ninth and (currently) final game in SNK's *Fatal Fury* franchise holds a special place in the hearts of many Neo-Geo owners. *Garou: Mark Of The Wolves* is one of the finest 2D fighting games ever made, and marks a glorious apex for a developer well respected inside the beat-'em-up genre. Updating its *Fatal Fury* franchise by adding a healthy dollop of youth was certainly a risky move, but one that paid off. This issue Stuart Hunt lovingly boots up an SNK legend and pulls apart its brilliance one bout at a time.



T.O.P. System
The T.O.P. (Tactical Offence Position) bar is a great new addition to the series. Players can place the T.O.P. Bar at one of three points on their energy bar (front, middle or end). The system works by heightening the player's powers all the time their energy level sits within the area of the T.O.P. Bar.



Just Defend
The Just Defend technique might lack the brilliant sense of risk and reward of *Street Fighter III Third Strike*'s parry system, but it still proves a wonderful addition to *Garou*'s combat. If performed correctly, it awards players with a slight chunk of health and the chance to quickly perform a counter.



Super Moves
Garou has two tiers of Super Moves (and a few secret ones too). The two main ones are S-Power and P-Power. The S-Power allows characters to perform a weaker version of a Super Move, and the P-Power allows them to perform a powerful version of their Super Move.



Break Moves
These allow characters to cancel out of a special move by pressing both A and B buttons at the very start of performing it, effectively feigning the attack. These prove a great way of confusing an opponent and punishing them royally with a devastating flurry of kicks and punches.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS

WHY IS IT A CLASSIC?



Balance, balance, balance

Shaking up the *Fatal Fury* franchise brilliantly, in *Garou* SNK dropped many of the fighters that had appeared in earlier *Fatal Fury* games (only Terry Bogard remains from the original line-up) but respectfully replaced them with students or offspring of previous fighters. As well as shaking up the character roster, SNK also tweaked *Fatal Fury*'s gameplay by dropping the awkward dual-plane system and adding all sorts of wonderful new mechanics to the series. If we had to put a finger on why *Garou* is such a classic, though, we'd point at the fact that it's the most balanced 2D fighting game in existence.

BEST CHARACTER

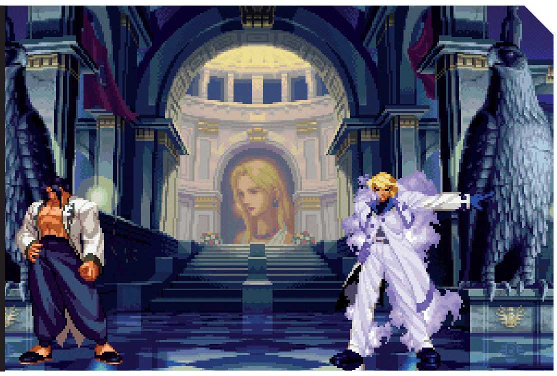


Rock Howard

Garou's character roster of 14 is somewhat meagre when compared to other beat-'em-up games, but each character is wonderfully balanced, meticulously designed and animates beautifully – the game is incredibly slick in that department. While we do have a fondness for heavy-fringed sociopath Freeman, we'd probably have to hand this particular honour to Rock Howard. As well as being a great all-round fighter, Rock's move set is a mixture of his late father Geese Howard and Terry Bogard's fighting styles, making him a fitting legacy of the feud between Geese and the Bogard brothers.



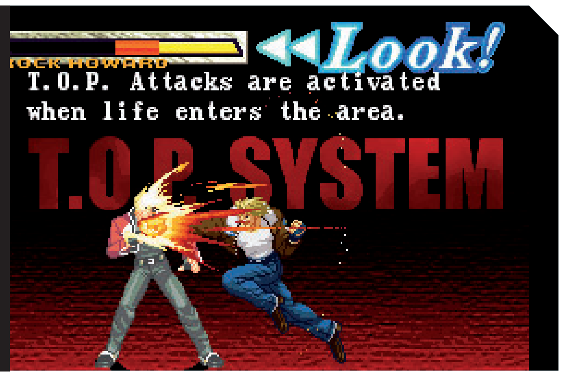
BEST BOSS



Kain R Heinlein

Set ten years after *Real Bout Fatal Fury*, *Garou*'s main story arc follows Terry's relationship with Geese's son, Rock. Following Geese's death, Terry adopts Rock and mentors him in the ways of Hakyokusaken martial arts. Meanwhile a new threat infects the streets of Southtown: Grant, a colossus of a man whose face is shrouded by a demon Halloween mask; and Rock's uncle, the pencil-suited Kain R Heinlein, who wishes to continue Geese's legacy. Heinlein is the better of the two bosses, but can only be fought by getting a AAA rank average during the game, or sneakily inputting a code.

BEST MECHANIC



T.O.P. System

Of the many new mechanics SNK introduced in *Garou*, the TOP System (or Tactical Offence Position, to give it its full title) deserves the most lip service. Before the first blood is drawn, players must place the TOP bar at any one of three points on their energy bar; when their energy level sits within this TOP Bar range during the fight, their powers are increased and a TOP Bar Special attack is unlocked. Players can also adjust the size of the TOP Bar; the smaller they make it, the greater damage it inflicts. The TOP Bar essentially throws each player a lifeline during the fight and adds a sense of strategy to the combat.

BEST STAGE



Terry's Stage

All of the stages in *Garou* look utterly fantastic, and most of them are brimming with animation and colour – and all this impressiveness is chugging from a 19-year-old piece of hardware, remember! While we do have a real love for Rock's stage, if only for the fact that the background music is clearly a mix of the Robert Miles's track *Children*, we have to hand it to Terry, whose fights take place aloft a speeding train. With each round that passes, the backgrounds change – it's a great touch, and shows the effort and meticulous attention to detail that SNK put into the game.

STANDOUT MOMENT



Its gameplay

While most Capcom brawlers opt to dazzling gamers with pyrotechnics, fireballs and the like, this can sometimes result in wizard-like dust-ups between both fighters as they throw projectiles from opposite ends of the screen. Most SNK brawlers, though, and *Garou* especially, opt for a more grounded approach to specials and attacks, allowing for more brutal and intense feeling fights. But really it's the sheer speed and fluidity at which *Garou*'s action ebbs and flows that proves the most vital ingredient to its overall quality; it allows for the combat to feel precise, and moves and controls to feel far more responsive and solid.

What the press said… ages ago

Gamespot 85%

"*Mark Of The Wolves* for the Dreamcast could be described as a doubly nostalgic game – it's a port of one of SNK's last great Neo-Geo games and is the last console port that SNK ever did. If you own a Dreamcast and have any interest at all in 2D fighting games, you owe it to yourself to pick up a copy of *Mark Of The Wolves*."

Defunct Games 79%

"*Mark Of The Wolves* is good, and highly recommended. Just be aware what you're getting yourself into before you blame us for being disappointed. It's not the best of the new technology, but then, it was never trying to be, and at least succeeds at that!"

What we think

Nine years on and *Garou* is as enjoyable today as it was back when it was amazing Neo-Geo owners. Sure, its high asking price makes it a little prohibitive on the AES, but both the Dreamcast and PS2 ports offer fine conversions of the game.



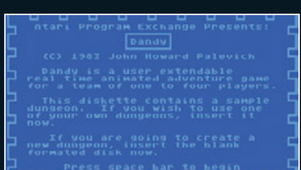
IN THE KNOW

- **PLATFORM:** NEO-GEO
- **DEVELOPER:** SNK
- **PUBLISHER:** SNK
- **RELEASED:** 2000
- **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** AES £300, MVS £35, DC £30, PS2 £50

THE MAKING OF...

Dandy

It may be obscure but, as Gauntlet's most prominent influence, Dandy is grandfather to dozens of dungeon crawl games. Craig Grannell talks to Dandy creator Jack Palevich about how it began



IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHERS:** ATARI PROGRAM EXCHANGE

» **DEVELOPER:** JACK PALEVICH

» **RELEASED:** 1983

» **PLATFORM:** ATARI 8-BIT

» **GENRE:** ARCADE SHOOTER

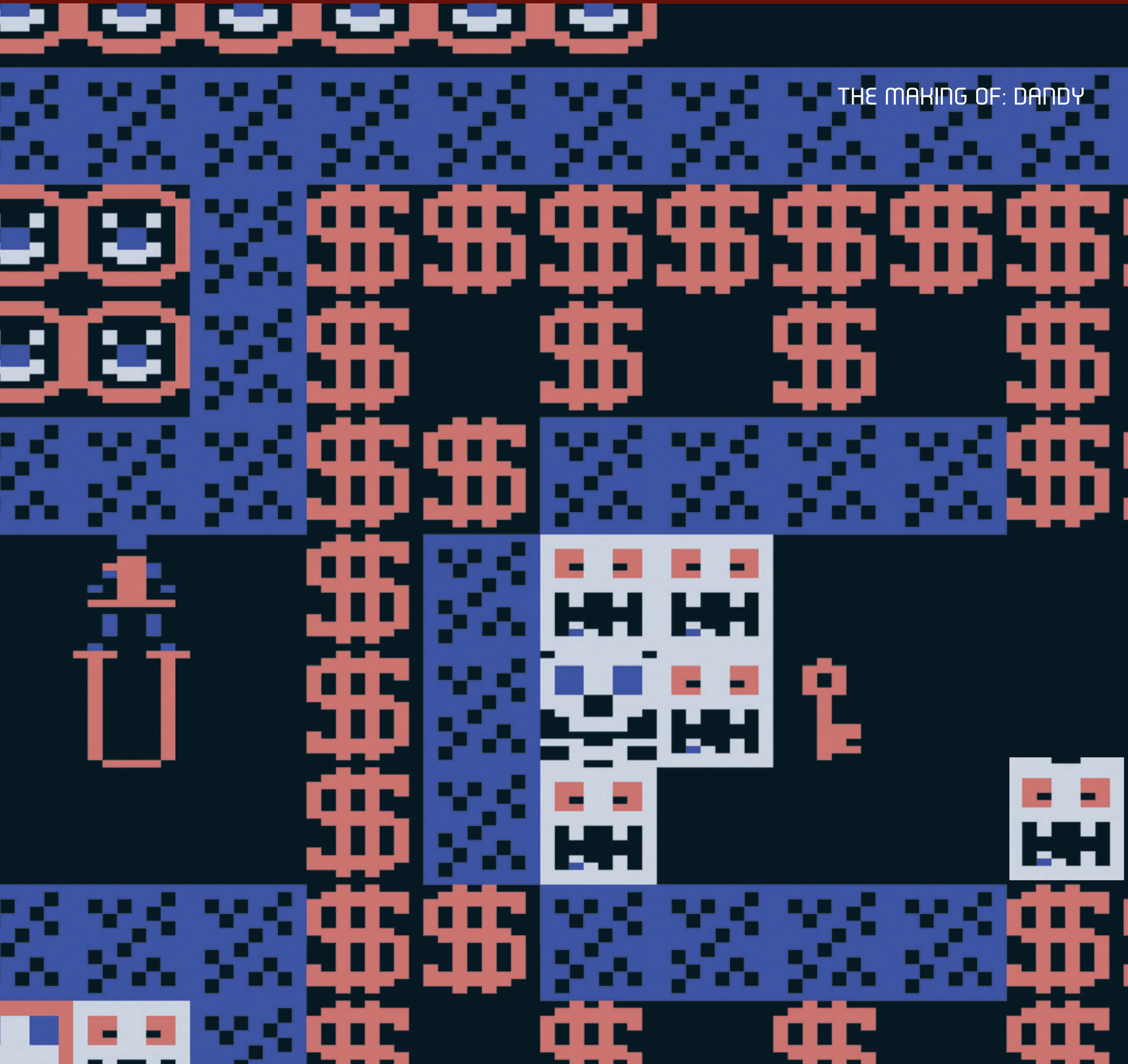
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £10+

A sprawling labyrinthine dungeon crawling with deadly monsters, belched out by generators. Keys that unlock secured areas of the dungeon. Four brave and hardy warriors, intent on reaching the dungeon's lowest levels, using only their wits, paltry weapons and sporadically found food to aid them. This might sound like Atari's hit arcade game *Gauntlet*, but we're talking about *Dandy* (also known as *Dandy Dungeon*), a top-down, RPG-inspired, dungeon-based shooter, released for Atari 8-bit systems. And before anyone gleefully yells "clone!", *Dandy* arrived a full two years before *Gauntlet* – the arcade game is the clone.

Dandy's story begins at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). In 1982, Jack Palevich was investigating ideas for his undergraduate thesis. A keen programmer from an early age, Jack initially considered writing an Atari 800 emulator for the MIT CADR Lisp Machine. "It would have been one of the first personal computer emulators," maintains Jack, "but after my thesis advisor stopped laughing at the absurdity of using a $100,000 machine to emulate an $800 machine, he asked me to pick another topic."

Along with an interest in computers, Jack liked co-operative gaming, and set about combining the two. "I never played any RPGs," he admits, adding that he didn't have the time, and had far too much fun programming, "but I'd bought the manual sets and watched other people play. I decided I wanted to recreate dungeon exploration pen-and-paper role-playing games on a computer, including the important team-based element".

Influenced somewhat by the Xerox Alto *Maze War* game – which Jack calls "the very first multiplayer LAN-based FPS"



– in addition to various top-down maze-based arcade games, *Dandy* slowly came together. "My initial plan included an active dungeon master, at a second computer, who controlled the dungeon, and sent in waves of attacking monsters," reveals Jack, who also invented various foes to roam the dungeon, hand-to-hand combat involving lightsabers, magical weapons, start and end movies, and an ambitious 3D viewpoint, "but I only had three months to write the game, while also still going to classes."

Dandy was subsequently scaled back to meet the tight deadline. The 3D viewpoint was scrapped in favour of simpler 2D levels, and many other components were simplified or removed. Arguably, though, the biggest change was to *Dandy*'s benefit. "Due to time-pressure, the dungeon-master console devolved into a simple file server, and once it was just a file server, it made sense to use the Atari 800's floppy disk," says Jack. The importance of this change can't be overstated – *Dandy* suddenly shifted from a complex, multi-computer gaming environment (which, admittedly, was ahead of its time, but unlikely to enable *Dandy* to achieve widespread popularity) to a tightly honed single-machine multiplayer videogame, combining RPG elements and arcade action.

"My initial plan included an active dungeon master, at a second computer, who controlled the dungeon"



THE MAKING OF... DANDY

Jack admits that although time pressure often forced his hand, he was by this stage already increasingly thinking about gameplay: "Many of *Dandy*'s changes happened in response to playtesting feedback. For example, I used to save a level's state when you left it, so you could go back, because the original idea was for players to go to the bottom level and then return back up. But nobody ever went up, except by mistake, so I took that feature out."

The inclusive nature of the development also led to another standout feature: a level editor. "That was a happy accident," admits Jack. "The first thing I did with *Dandy* was create a big, empty level with a man running around it. On playing the level, it occurred to me that if I had the man leave a trail of shapes, I could use that as a simple paint program to create a level editor."

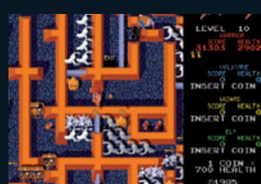
With *Dandy* having a level editor right from the start, Jack was able to get friends to design levels, easing pressure when his own ideas ran dry. "I used a letter to display the level name, and so it seemed reasonable to have 26 levels, but I ran out of ideas long before the end – one level's my signature, 'Hackerjack', and another's a picture of my dog!" Despite the occasional iffy design, Jack considers some of his *Dandy* levels a success: "My favourite is the first level, which was one of the first I designed, as a tutorial on how to play the game. I'm also proud of the final 'Heaven' level, and like the idea of a level full of treasure that endlessly repeats."

Elsewhere, Jack set about fine-tuning the dungeon's contents: a mix of walls, monsters, food and devices to aid players. The monster mechanic in *Dandy* was unique at the time: often appearing from spawners, monsters attack in swarms; monsters also come in three sizes, devolving to the next size down when shot, becoming less deadly. Shoot the smallest monster type and it dies. Much of this design was technically driven, as Jack explains: "Once I decided on allowing a level editor, I wanted to ensure every possible level just worked. I didn't want auxiliary data structures that might limit how many monsters you could use. I wanted to have all the state of the game stored in the 2D array that was used to display the level. So each monster was represented by a single number, which was used directly by the Atari hardware to draw the monster's graphics. When a strong monster took damage, I'd replace it with a weaker monster, and so on until it was destroyed. It was then simple to use three different graphics for the different levels of monster health."

RUN THE GAUNTLET

DANDY AND GAUNTLET are poles apart aesthetically, but on playing both games, it's readily apparent how similar they are. Both offer simultaneous and slightly awkward four-player modes; both enable you to rampage around a scrolling dungeon, killing monsters that spew forth from generators; and both offer a key/locked door model, along with peppering the dungeon with health-boosting food, which has mysteriously managed to stay fresh in putrid conditions.

Most of *Gauntlet*'s changes were designed to suck coins: health levels constantly dropping, immediate food consumption, a lack of player resurrection, and more frenetic gameplay. That said, *Gauntlet* also added important ideas to the mix, including distinct monster types, and melee attacks for hand-to-hand combat. It's likely, though, that *Gauntlet*'s sheer success, rather than amended gameplay mechanics, are what led to it becoming a 'template' for an entire genre, at the expense of the obscure *Dandy*."





» [Atari 8-Bit] Level C introduces the first enemy spawners, resembling skulls, ramping up *Dandy*'s difficulty level significantly.



» [Atari 8-Bit] For Jack, enabling four players in *Dandy* was the heart of the game: "It was all about re-creating the RPG dungeon party experience."

The spawners arrived from a need to make levels harder, and were inspired by the cellular automata of Conway's *Game Of Life*; but monster swarms, where the player rapidly finds themselves surrounded, came from nothing much at all. "When I created *Dandy*, I was unaware of the likes of [popular Eighties college game] *Rogue* and didn't have ideas for monster behaviour beyond 'run right towards the player'," laughs Jack. "If I'd known about *Rogue*, maybe *Dandy*'s monsters would have been more interesting!" While never interesting, Jack reveals the monsters sometimes at least became odd during playtesting: "There were bugs where the monsters all ran away from you, or ran at right angles, resulting in orbiting monsters! In retrospect, I should have used these bugs to implement 'scare monster' and 'confuse monster' spells!"

Final pieces of the *Dandy* puzzle centred around ensuring games lasted a decent while. With up to 30 per cent of your heath removed on hitting a monster, food was sprinkled around each level. Unlike the later *Gauntlet*, *Dandy* enables you to store food, saving it for when it's most needed. "Notice that eating food always maximises your health," says Jack. "I wanted the player to decide how much they wanted to gamble on using food – should they wait until their health is low, but then risk dying from a single monster bite?" But even death is not the end in *Dandy*, since shooting resurrection hearts enables players in 'limbo' to return. "The heart was one of the game's last additions. It was added because during playtesting people would start a game over once a party member died. Adding the hearts encouraged the party to keep going, and gave players a nice side-quest."

With his game complete, Jack got an 'A' on his thesis, and *Dandy* was subsequently released through the Atari Program Exchange. But the future for Jack and *Dandy* became turbulent when Atari's arcade division unleashed *Gauntlet*.

» [Atari 8-Bit] Overt instructions 'hidden' in the maze design of level A, providing a tutorial on *Dandy* components.



Strikingly similar to *Dandy* (see 'Run The Gauntlet'), Atari's arcade game led to Jack taking legal action to ensure he retained the right to further develop his own creation. "Atari really took advantage of me," he says, ruefully. "To be honest, IP laws weren't very clear in those days, and also MIT owned the rights to my thesis work, and wasn't interested in pursuing claims against Atari."

Jack says his biggest regret, aside from possible lost royalties, was not demanding a 'designed by' credit in *Gauntlet* itself: "I asked for it, but Atari cleverly put me off with the excuse that the ROMs had been burned. Unfortunately, I didn't think of requesting a credit in future revisions of the game." We ask whether Jack feels slighted by the incident, and whether he thinks *Dandy* has been wrongly overlooked as father to entire genres, in favour of *Gauntlet* – especially given that many of *Gauntlet*'s gameplay mechanics originated in *Dandy*. "My friends and much of the game design community know about *Dandy*, and so I don't really mind. Also, after *Gauntlet 2*, the *Gauntlet* franchise moved off in its own direction, away from *Dandy*. I don't think current versions of *Gauntlet* have much to do with my design."

Gauntlet also pops up when we ask what Jack would change in *Dandy*, given the chance to go back: "That's a good question. Most of the obvious improvements were done in *Gauntlet* – things like adding character classes, more types of monsters, changing the environment sprite set on different levels, adding in synthetically generated levels, character classes, better animation, more kinds of loot, and so on… But I think if I had to do *Dandy* again with exactly the same time and design budget, I'd put in differently shaped levels, and a few more types of monsters. And it might be worth creating a shop – the money you collect is currently useless!"

Today, Jack remains immersed in the world of technology, and worked for seven years at Microsoft on graphics libraries and tools for the Xbox and Xbox 360. More recently, he wrote the 'Street View' Google Maps 3D viewer for the Android smartphone. With a family to support, Jack says he has little time for writing games as a hobby, although it's clear *Dandy* never entirely left him. "I like learning new programming languages, and when I learn a new language or library, I often try to implement *Dandy* in it, to get a feel for whether the language is a good fit for videogame programming – I guess most people would use *Tetris* or *Snake* instead!"

We're told the current 'speed record' for implementing *Dandy* from scratch is just 11 hours, using C# and XNA for the Xbox 360. Unfortunately, no version of *Dandy* has yet appeared on a modern console, and Jack's unsure whether that will ever change: "One problem I've run into in developing *Dandy* for modern consoles is that most of the obvious incremental improvements, such as improving the way characters move, or adding more kinds of monsters, actually make *Dandy* more like *Gauntlet* – and that's just not a direction I want to go in. I don't want to just copy that game, and so I feel that I'd have to work for quite a while to move beyond the *Gauntlet* design space and strike out into new territory."

» [Atari 8-Bit] *Dandy* integrates a level editor, enabling you to rapidly fashion your own dungeons.



"If I'd known about Rogue, maybe Dandy's monsters would have been more interesting!"

» [Atari 8-Bit] The final dungeon level is 'heaven': full of cash, but endlessly repeating.



TOGETHER IN ELECTRIC DREAMS

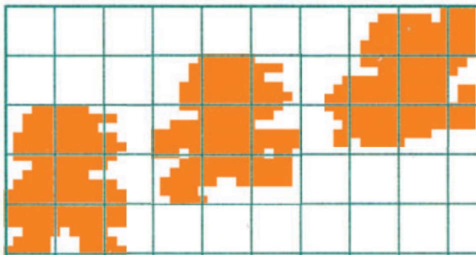
DANDY RESURFACED IN 1986 on major home computer formats. Bearing little direct similarity to Jack's game, the update instead ripped off *Gauntlet*, resulting in a legal spat between publisher Electric Dreams and Atari, causing myriad irony machines to explode.

Although the Z80 versions are fine, the C64 port is iffy, and programmer Nick 'Orlando' Pelling reveals why: "*Dandy* was written by a bunch calling themselves 'The Ram Jam Corporation', who promised Electric Dreams a C64 conversion by Christmas. Time passed, nothing turned up. Electric Dreams pulled the plug and asked me to give the C64 version a go."

Although he'd never programmed the C64, Nick took on the challenge, considering *Dandy* a simple game: "I knew 6502 assembler inside out, had access to a dev-kit, and worked for six days without sleep, took a day off, and worked for another six days to get everything working. Despite the mad effort, Electric Dreams messed up the packaging and were unable to get it out for Christmas anyway…"

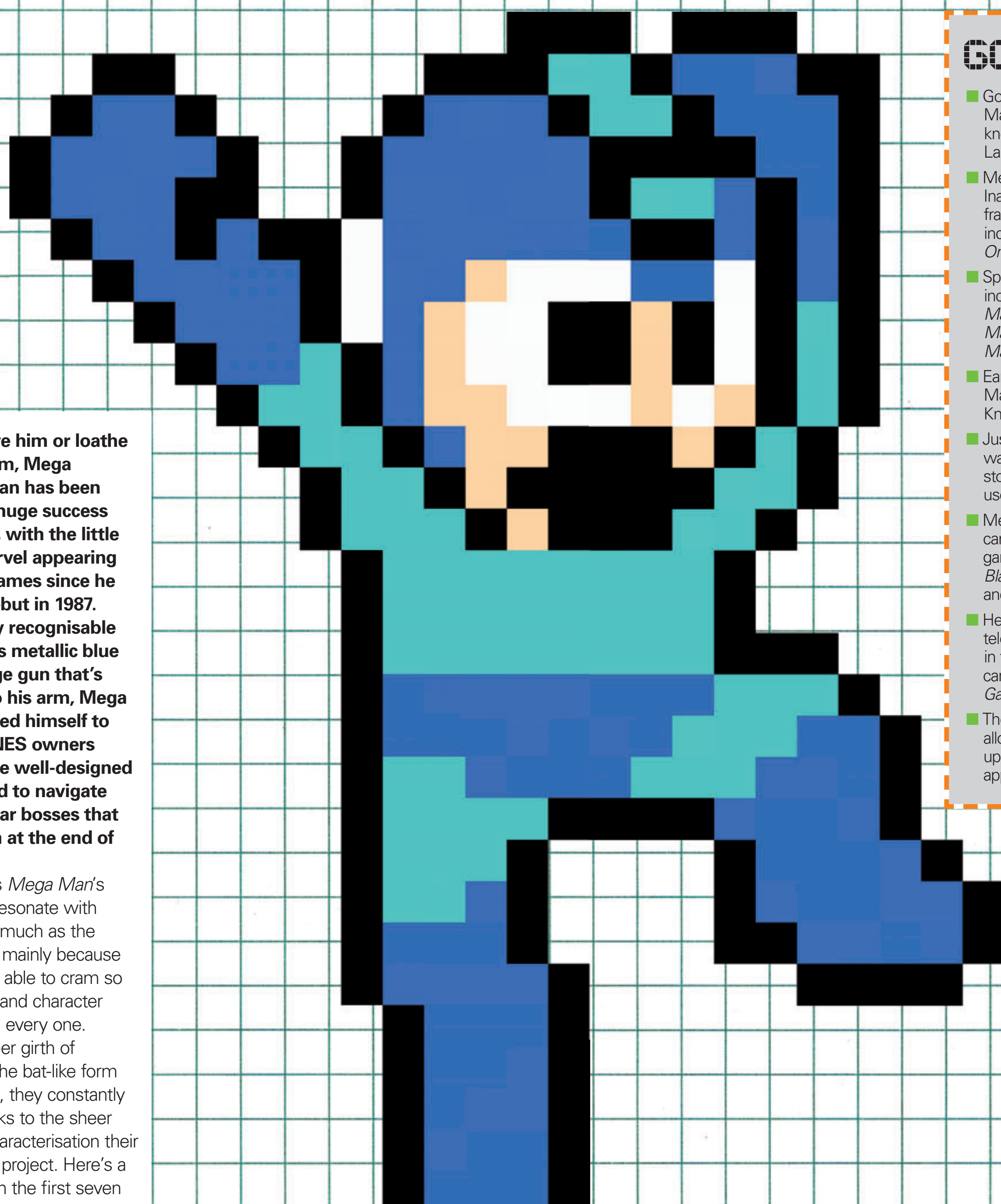


Project Mega Man



PIXEL

SPRITES ARE ONE OF THE GREATEST INVENTIONS OF THE 20TH CENTURY, SO JOIN US AS WE LOOK AT THE MANY HEROES AND VILLAINS THAT MAKE GAMES SO MEMORABLE. THE MONTH, THE MEGA MAN SERIES

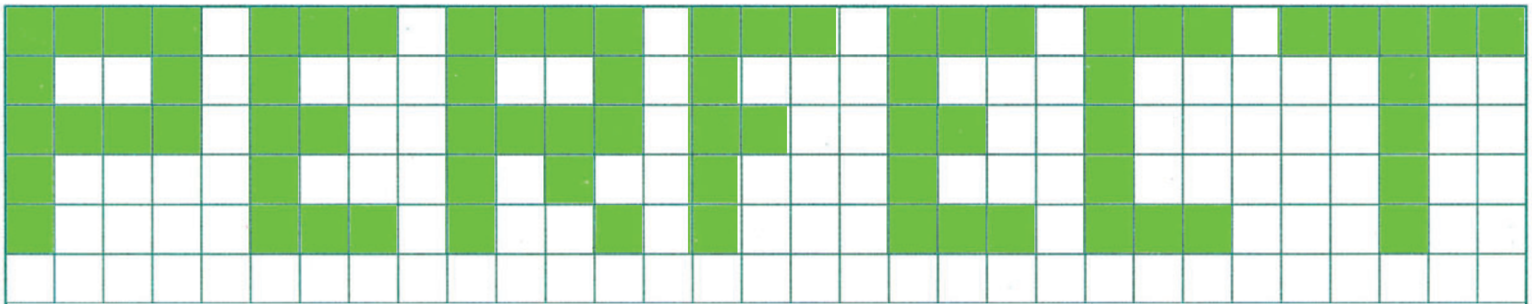


Love him or loathe him, Mega Man has been a huge success for Capcom, with the little metallic marvel appearing in over 20 games since he made his debut in 1987. Immediately recognisable thanks to his metallic blue suit and huge gun that's grafted onto his arm, Mega Man endeared himself to a legion of NES owners thanks to the well-designed levels he had to navigate and the titular bosses that awaited him at the end of each stage.

Indeed, it's *Mega Man*'s bosses that resonate with the player as much as the hero himself, mainly because Capcom was able to cram so much charm and character into each and every one. From the sheer girth of Gutsman to the bat-like form of Shademan, they constantly impress thanks to the sheer amount of characterisation their limited pixels project. Here's a selection from the first seven games so you can see exactly what we mean. Good hunting.

GO DEEPER

- Good luck finding a Mega Man game in Japan. He's known as Rockman in the Land of the Rising Sun.
- Mega Man's creator is Keiji Inafune. Other Capcom franchises he's worked on include *Dead Rising* and the *Onimusha* games.
- Spin-offs of the core franchise include *Mega Man X*, *Mega Man Battle Network*, *Mega Man Star Force* and *Mega Man Legends*.
- Earlier names for Mega Man included Rainbow Man, Knuckle Kid and Might Kid
- Just like Alex Kidd, Mega Man was going to have a paper, stone, scissors mechanic for use against certain enemies.
- Mega Man also likes to cameo in other Capcom games, including *Onimusha Blade Warriors*, *Cannon Spike* and *Marvel Vs Capcom*.
- He's also no stranger to television and has appeared in the popular Eighties cartoon, *Captain N: The Games Master*.
- The Mega Buster (which allows Mega Man to charge up shots) made its first appearance in *Mega Man 4*.





Mega Man First Appearance: Mega Man

Dr Light First Appearance: Mega Man

Dr Wily First Appearance: Mega Man

Rush First Appearance: Mega Man 3

Protoman First Appearance: Mega Man 3

Airman First Appearance: Mega Man 2

Bombman First Appearance: Mega Man

Brightman First Appearance: Mega Man 4

Bubbleman First Appearance: Mega Man 2

Burstman First Appearance: Mega Man 7



Centaurman First Apperance: Mega Man 6

Chargeman First Apperance: Mega Man 5

Cloudman First Appearance: Mega Man 7

Crystalman First Apperance: Mega Man 5

Cutman First Appearance: Mega Man

Darkman First Apperance: Mega Man 5

Diveman First Apperance: Mega Man 4

Drillman First Apperance: Mega Man 4

Dustman First Apperance: Mega Man 4

Elecman First Apperance: Mega Man



Fireman First Appearance: Mega Man

Flameman First Appearance: Mega Man 6

Flashman First Appearance: Mega Man 2

Freezeman First Appearance: Mega Man 7

Geminiman First Appearance: Mega Man 3

Gravityman First Appearance: Mega Man 5

Gutsman First Appearance: Mega Man

Gyroman First Appearance: Mega Man 5

Hardman First Appearance: Mega Man 3

Heatman First Appearance: Mega Man 2



Iceman First Appearance: Mega Man

Junkman First Appearance: Mega Man 7

Knightman First Appearance: Mega Man 6

Magnetman First Appearance: Mega Man 3

Metalman First Appearance: Mega Man 2

Napalmman First Appearance: Mega Man 5

Needleman First Appearance: Mega Man 3

Pharoahman First Appearance: Mega Man 4

Quickman First Appearance: Mega Man 2

Ringman First Appearance: Mega Man 4



Shademan First Appearance: Mega Man 7

Shadowman First Appearance: Mega Man 3

Skullman First Appearance: Mega Man 4

Slashman First Appearance: Mega Man 7

Snakeman First Appearance: Mega Man 3

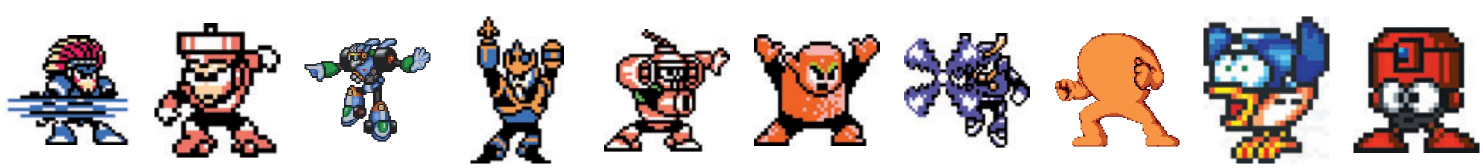
Sparkman First Appearance: Mega Man 3

Spring Man First Appearance: Mega Man 7

Starman First Appearance: Mega Man 5

Stoneman First Appearance: Mega Man 5

Toadman First Appearance: Mega Man 4



Tomahawkman First Appearance: Mega Man 6

Topman First Appearance: Mega Man 3

Turboman First Appearance: Mega Man 7

Waveman First Appearance: Mega Man 5

Windman First Appearance: Mega Man 6

Woodman First Appearance: Mega Man 2

Yamatoman First Appearance: Mega Man 6

The Yellow Devil First Appearance: Mega Man

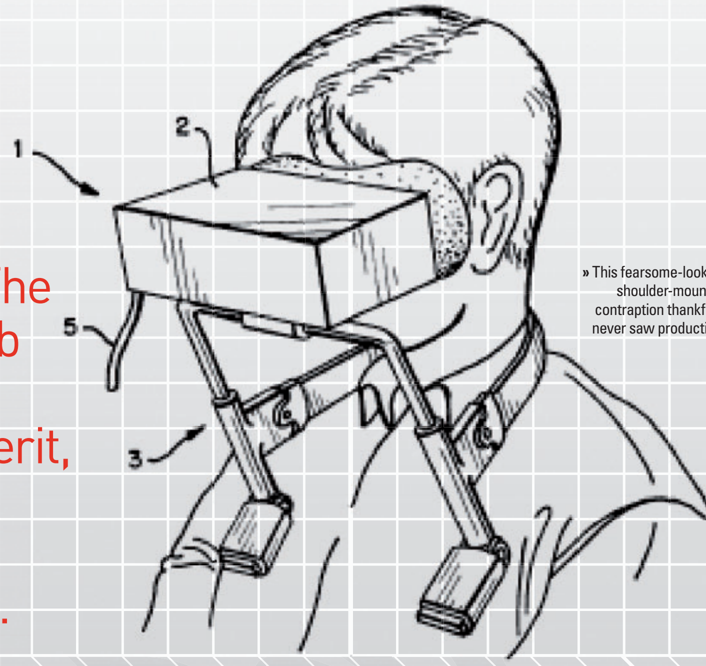
Beat First Appearance: Mega Man 7

Eddie First Appearance: Mega Man 7

> "Game Boy creator Gunpei Yokoi hit upon the notion of using two displays to create a three-dimensional image"







» This fearsome-looking shoulder-mounted contraption thankfully never saw production.

It's the console that Nintendo doesn't want you to know about. The company's most high-profile bomb has been vilified as a headache-inducing monstrosity with little merit, but is this assessment fair? **Damien McFerran** pops a few aspirins and prepares to find out...

VIRTUAL BOY

Everybody has an awkward secret that they'd rather not share with the world. Be it an old school photo that showcases your crimes against fashion or an acutely embarrassing vinyl LP in your record collection, we keep these things hidden in the hope that if we ignore them they might cease to exist. In the case of Japanese videogame giant Nintendo, the Virtual Boy is unquestionably its 'dirty little secret'. More than a decade after this unusual console sank almost without trace after enduring a period of consumer indifference, it remains a byword for dubious videogame hardware.

The genesis of the Virtual Boy came about when Nintendo was approached by US firm Reflection Technologies in the early Nineties. Reflection was attempting to find a buyer for its independently produced display technology and Game Boy creator Gunpei Yokoi was quick to spot potential in the system; he hit upon the notion of using two displays to create a three-dimensional image. In 1992 Nintendo acquired exclusive worldwide videogame licensing rights to Reflection Technologies' innovative system and Yokoi's Research & Development 1 team set about creating the console that would be the first fruit of this union.

» The adjustable stand was agonisingly close to production in Japan, but the plug was pulled on the Virtual Boy before it could come to the aid of long-suffering owners.



As development progressed, Yokoi and his staff toyed with several different designs. Despite the machine's close ties with the concept of 'virtual reality', the idea of having a head-mounted system was ruled out almost immediately. Yokoi claimed that as soon as it was decided that the console would not support motion tracking to detect head movements, the decision was made to mount the system on a stand, rather than affixing it to the player's head.

Year released: 1995

Original price: ¥15,000 (Japan), $180 (US)

Buy it now for: £80

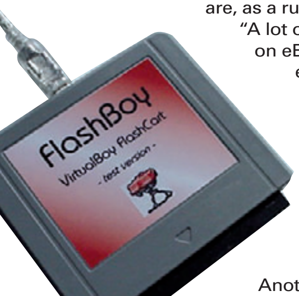
Associated magazines: *Virtual Boy Tsushin (special one-off issue)*

Why the Virtual Boy was great… It offered an experience that you simply could not get anywhere else. Okay, so the hardware was flawed, the software could have been better and prolonged use often came with unbelievable neck strain, but it's certainly worth sitting down with this wholly unique console at least once in your life.

While R&D1 furiously tinkered away within Nintendo's Kyoto HQ, news of this potentially ground-breaking new console – codenamed 'VR-32' – began to slowly trickle through to the gaming press. The biggest news was that it would pack a 32-bit CPU, like the upcoming Sony PlayStation and Sega Saturn. The next revelation was the ground-breaking 3D display, which promised a new standard of immersion. However, the timing of this news – not to mention the entire project – was somewhat perplexing as Nintendo was also making a tremendous amount of noise about its 64-bit 'Project Reality' console (which would go on to become the Nintendo 64). Bearing this in mind, it's unsurprising that most gamers therefore interpreted the VR-32 as the spiritual successor to the aging Game Boy and the fact that Yokoi was involved only served to confirm this assumption. Regardless of this confusion, Nintendo fans were hungry for new hardware and therefore their interest was sufficiently piqued.

However, within the walls of Nintendo's HQ, Yokoi was unsettled. Nintendo was keen to get the VR-32 onto the market before committing all of its energies to the Nintendo 64, but it has been alleged that Yokoi felt it needed further fine-tuning. His

A COLLECTOR'S DREAM?



Given its status as Nintendo's most high-profile balls-up, it's not surprising to find that the Virtual Boy is a hot collectable amongst Nintendo fans. However, consoles that are commercial failures are, as a rule, difficult to collect for – is that the case here? "A lot of the hardware and software is freely available on eBay" says Christian Radke, editor-in-chief of the excellent Planet Virtual Boy. "But if you want to go for a complete collection, you'll need a few thousands bucks, especially for the 'rare four'. These are *SD Gundam Dimension War* and *Virtual Bowling* – which both fetch about $800 - closely followed by *Virtual Lab*. *Space Invaders* is the fourth rare game, but can be found much cheaper, maybe $200." Peripherals are equally in demand: "Every Virtual Boy owner should have an AC adaptor. Another highly desired accessory is the FlashBoy, a semi-professionally made USB flash cartridge which I produced and distributed together with its creator, Richard Hutchinson, from December 2007 to February 2009."



» A Japanese magazine advert for the Virtual Boy. As with TV commercials, it was difficult to show off its unique 3D capabilities.



» Despite Gunpei Yokoi's previously successes – which included the Game Boy – the failure of the Virtual Boy resulted in him losing his coveted position at Nintendo.

> "With the gaming press expecting a 32-bit powerhouse, the red and black 2D visuals were a shock"

reservations were disregarded; Nintendo was losing face because of Sony and Sega's impending entry into the 32-bit race and it was clear that the company needed something to tide fans over until the N64 hardware could be completed. Having expended millions on VR-32 development already, Nintendo was understandably eager to get the hardware out onto shop shelves in order to recoup its costs. Yokoi and his team prepped for launch but unfortunately the VR-32 (by this point officially rechristened Virtual Boy) would experience one of the most disastrous unveilings in the entire history of the videogame industry.

The first inkling that Nintendo might have a turkey on its hands was the overwhelmingly negative reaction to the Virtual Boy's debut at the Shoshinkai show in November 1994. With the gaming press expecting a 32-bit powerhouse to rival Sony and Sega's recently announced offerings, the red and black 2D visuals generated by Yokoi's TomyTronic 3D-lookalike were something of a shock and many journalists at the time were surprisingly frank with their opinion of the device. Some openly questioned Nintendo's sanity, while others predicted there and then that it would fail miserably. Few had anything positive to say. Despite this devastatingly unenthusiastic reaction, Nintendo of Japan supremo Hiroshi Yamauchi remained bullish about the Virtual Boy's prospects and confidently predicted it would shift 3 million consoles in Japan, as well as 14 million cartridges between its launch and March 1996.

Prior to launch, Nintendo was extremely cagey about revealing the secrets of its new machine – possibly out of fear that rival firms would copy the concept. Inside the console was a fairly complex array of cutting-edge technology that was able to create the impression of 3D depth. "For each eye there is a bank of vertically stacked red LEDs," explains programmer Steve Woita, who worked on Ocean Software's *Waterworld* Virtual Boy title. "These are arranged with 224 LEDs per bank and spray their information onto a mirror that is spinning at 50 times a second and delivering the game screen image to the retina. This is done for both eyes and means there has to be a grand total of 448 LEDs continually spraying information into your eyes." Jason Plumb, who worked alongside Woita on *Waterworld*, expands on this. "This process presents a separate image to each eye," he says. "If these images match the disparity that you are used to seeing in real life, then you perceive a sensation of depth related to the disparity between the images. Objects in the distance appear in the same position in both images, but the closer an object is in the scene, the more the horizontal position changes between the images. You can see this effect by holding a finger in front of your face, and comparing the image you see with each eye by closing the other. Your right eye sees your finger on the left side of what you can see, and the left eye sees it on the right side." Industry experts voiced their reservations about the predominantly 'red' visuals, but as Plumb explains, this was a cost-cutting measure more than anything else. "The main reason was that colours other than red were cost prohibitive," he comments. "Red LEDs were also more power efficient and easier to see than others."

The much talked about 32-bit CPU might have placed the console in a different league to the aging Super Nintendo and Sega Mega Drive, but because of the additional effort of marshalling two displays instead of the traditional one, the power of the NEC810 CPU processor wasn't instantly apparent. "From a programming point of view it was difficult; the machine essentially had to keep twice as many screen buffers ready for display in the next frame than it would in a normal console game," says Woita. It also didn't help that the console lacked many features that were just starting to be incorporated into modern home consoles at the time. "The strange thing about the Virtual Boy was that it was a 3D device without

COMMUNITY VIRTUAL BOY SITES TO WATCH

Planet Virtual Boy
www.vr32.de/

Presided over by the ebullient Christian Radke, this excellent site sports a look as distinctive as the Virtual Boy itself. A wealth of information and media is at your fingertips, and there's also a well-attended forum which attracts posts on a daily basis. It's one of the only Virtual Boy sites that still gets updated.



Virtual Boy.net
www.virtual-boy.org/

Planet Virtual Boy's only real rival, Virtual Boy.net has sadly remained dormant for a couple of years now but it's still a gold mine of data. Webmaster Ferry Groenendijk is something of a Virtual Boy expert, so you can be assured of an enlightening experience if you happen to point your web browser this way.



The Unofficial Nintendo Virtual Boy Home Page
http://tinyurl.com/kgvg9

The official home of the 'Reality Boy' Virtual Boy emulator, this site also contains information on hacking the system. If you're brave enough to crack open your machine, you'll find lots that is of interest here.



Virtual Boy Odyssey
http://tinyurl.com/dhtrgt

This site chronicles one man's quest to obtain a complete collection of sealed Virtual Boy games. The design may be amateurish and the layout confusing, but the author's enthusiasm shines through; this guy insists that the Virtual Boy changed his life and, to be honest, we're not brave enough to argue with him.

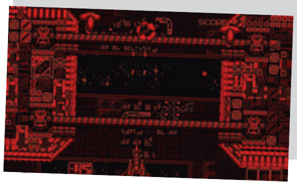


PERFECT FIVE

Vertical Force

Released: 1995
Published by: Nintendo
Created by: Hudson Soft
By the same developer:
Super Star Soldier

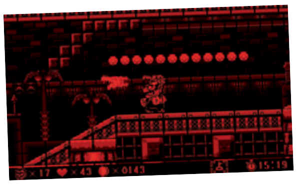
A part of Hudson's legendary *Star Soldier* series in all but name, *Vertical Limit* is perhaps the most effective (and obvious) use of the Virtual Boy technology. As the title suggests, it's a vertically scrolling shooter with one unique twist: you can switch between two planes of depth at the touch of a button. While it's arguable that the game could have been achieved just as effectively on 'normal' consoles, the visual trick is undeniably impressive.



Virtual Boy Wario Land

Released: 1995
Published by: Nintendo
Created by: Nintendo
By the same developer:
Galactic Pinball

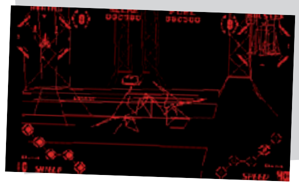
Often cited by hardcore fans as the best piece of software available on the machine, *Virtual Boy Wario Land* follows on from the excellent Game Boy title and sees Wario's arch-nemesis searching for treasure in the Amazon. While it plays like a fairly traditional platformer and showcases Wario's penchant for wearing ability-giving headgear, the Virtual Boy's unique display is utilised to create gameplay situations.



Red Alarm

Released: 1995
Published by: Nintendo
Created by: T&E Soft
By the same developer:
T&E Virtual Golf

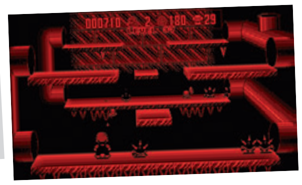
Otherwise known as 'that game that looks like *StarFox*', *Red Alarm* is one of the only 'true' 3D titles available on the system; however, due to the limitations of the hardware, it displays wire-frame graphics rather than 'filled' polygons. Still, the effect is striking and despite the undistinguished reputation of the developer, *Red Alarm* is actually pretty good fun to play. It's still a distant second to the illustrious *StarFox*, though.



Mario Clash

Released: 1995
Published by: Nintendo
Created by: Nintendo
By the same developer:
Mario's Tennis

Alongside the simplistic *Mario's Tennis*, this is the only other Virtual Boy title to feature Nintendo's famous plumbing mascot. Rather than replicate the gameplay of the 'classic' Mario adventures, it instead apes the single-screen blueprint laid down by the ancient *Mario Bros*. It's very easy to pick up and is incredibly addictive, even if the repetitive nature of the gameplay makes it more of a short-burst proposition.



Panic Bomber

Released: 1995
Published by: Nintendo
Created by: Hudson Soft
By the same developer:
Bomberman

Although it features Hudson's most famous creation, Bomberman, this isn't your usual bomb-based outing – like the PC Engine version before it, *Panic Bomber* is a *Puyo Puyo*-style puzzle title. While the 3D effect generated by the Virtual Boy has no actual bearing on the gameplay, *Panic Bomber* is nevertheless a marvel to behold. The only real drawback is that it doesn't contain a two-player option – what a shame.

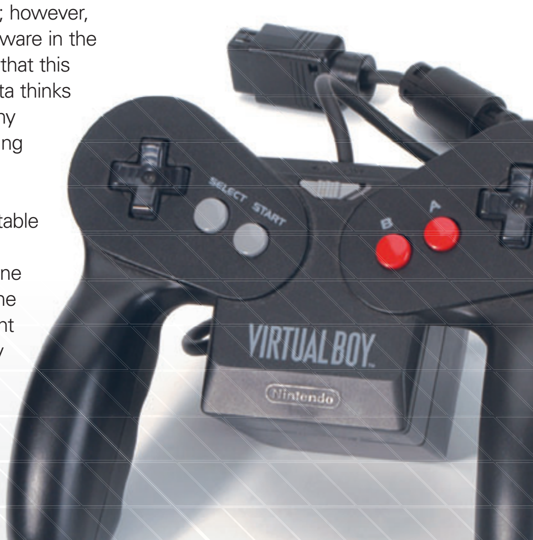


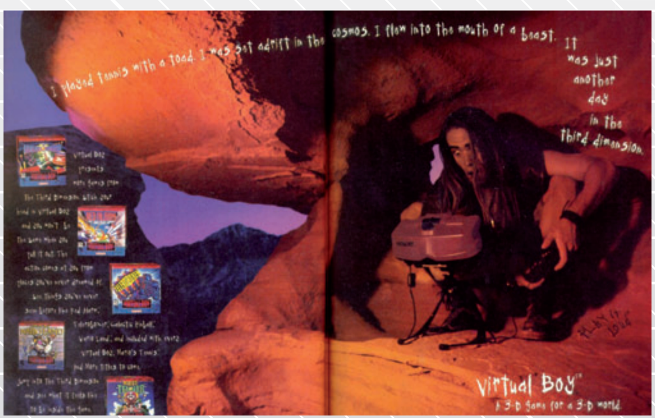
dedicated 3D hardware," comments Plumb. "3D hardware acceleration was just starting to blossom at the time and required too much power to incorporate into what was essentially a portable device. So, the Virtual Boy had a standard NEC810 processor with a couple of other chips to handle rendering sprites and sound." While it might have been lacking from a technological viewpoint, elsewhere it was genuinely ground-breaking; take the unique controller – which arguably had a massive influence on the design of the N64 pad – for example. "It has extensions that you grip with the palm of each hand," says Plumb. "Most controllers of the day were designed to sit in your fingers." The controller also features two D-pads – something that would later be mimicked by the twin analogue sticks of the PlayStation Dual Shock. "I really liked the Virtual Boy controller," admits Woita. "I thought it was ergonomically designed to meet the needs of all kinds of potential game designs."

When the Japanese launch arrived on 21 July 1995 it heralded some unusual scenes. The anxious queues of hardcore fans that greeted the launch of the Super Famicom in 1990 were suspiciously absent and day-one reports suggested that stores failed to shift all of their Virtual Boy consoles – something that is almost unheard of with a Nintendo hardware release, even to this day. This was despite the fact that the console had seen its initial RRP slashed from ¥19,800 to ¥15,000 – an attempt by Nintendo to make it "more appealing to a wider range of gamers".

The reasons for this dismal debut were manifold, but perhaps the most important was the lack of truly killer software; while the opening salvo of titles was fairly enjoyable, there was no *Super Mario World* or *F-Zero* to convince people the machine was worth owning for. Third-party support – usually so muscular with Nintendo hardware – was suspiciously light on the ground, and it transpired that this was largely down to Yamauchi's orders. In an somewhat misguided attempt to ensure that the Virtual Boy only got the very best standard of software, he made sure that only a select few companies were shown the technology and permitted to sign up for development. It was a bizarre method of 'quality control' that ultimately backfired, as the system struggled to gain any kind of third-party support after its catastrophic opening week sales – in fact, only 22 games were ever produced in its entire life span.

The system's position within Nintendo's catalogue also caused bewilderment. People had been expecting the next Game Boy and the fact that 'out of the box' the Virtual Boy was only able to run when powered by six AA batteries seemed to confirm its portable nature; however, after seeing the finished hardware in the flesh it was painfully obvious that this wasn't a mobile system. Woita thinks that in this regard the company was probably guilty of not being transparent enough with the aim of the project. "What Nintendo really meant by portable is 'transportable' in that you could carry the device from one stationary place to another," he says. "They never really meant 'portable' as in the Game Boy or DS type of portability. Imagine if you were to try and play the game while walking around… you'd fall down the stairs or bump into a wall!"





» Virtual Boy adverts failed to convey its unique stereoscopic 3D aspect.

» *C&VG* produced a supplement called 'Go!' that was devoted to handheld machines, with the Game Boy being the main focus.







» **[Virtual Boy]** Based on the flop film, *Waterworld* saw you controlling a boat and blasting Smokers' boats to stop them capturing Atoll inhabitants.

For Nintendo, the bad news didn't end with the disappointing opening week sales. Those consumers that took the plunge and made a purchase complained of headaches after prolonged use; this was possibly a side effect of the harsh red visuals, but it's just as likely that these users weren't adjusting the focus settings correctly. "Because the distance between the left and right eye is different for everybody, the Virtual Boy had to have a way for the user to adjust the independent spinning mirrors," explains Woita. "The knob at the top of the device would let you adjust what you see in the same way that you adjust a pair of binoculars to visually feel comfortable for your eyes." Nausea was another apparent side effect, but again this was probably down to users failing to calibrate the hardware properly – while the images generated by the Virtual Boy had the potential to cause sickness, programmers made efforts to ensure that this unwelcome feature was not included in the finished software they produced. "You could display whatever you wanted in each display," explains Plumb. "The hardware did not force any correspondence at all. I'm sure that if you displayed images that were too outside what the brain is used to seeing then it would be somewhat stressful to experience." To prove this point, Woita recalls a moment during the production of *Waterworld* when proper procedure wasn't followed: "When we were tuning the horizontal distances between the left and right eye, our manager took a copy of the game to the test lab without us knowing and the testers got a little bit queasy! Of course, this all got fixed the next day."

These scare stories – combined with Nintendo's own admission that using the system could damage the eyesight of children under the age of seven – did much to harm the public perception of the console, but hindsight has proven that the vast majority of owners could play their machines without experiencing any of these problems. Still, there was no getting away from the fact that the Virtual Boy was not a particularly comfortable console on which to game; it required the user to adopt a hunched seated position which led to further complaints of neck strain. Compared with the glorious liberation offered by the Game Boy, these issues made the Virtual Boy look distinctly non-user-friendly. It didn't help that Nintendo made some significant blunders with other vital aspects of the console, too. Although the system showcased an 'EXT Port' interface which would allow two machines to be linked together (a feature which had arguably contributed to the Game Boy's incredible mass-market success), a link cable was never produced. "A two-player cable was in the works," reveals Plumb. "I remember working with *Waterworld*'s 'head-to-head' mode, but in the end this feature was dropped from our plans for the game pretty early in production, as the cable didn't appear."

Despite the Virtual Boy's frosty reception in its homeland, Nintendo continued to plan the US release; however, this time it was eager to enlist support from as many third-party developers as possible. "Nintendo was great to work with all along the way," admits Woita. "They had a two-day development conference up in Seattle before the US launch and I learned about some cool new features that had never been found in a gaming device before, or since. I've worked on so many different types of consoles and development environments and I must say the Virtual Boy was a very interesting console to develop for. You'd compile your code on the VB development box that was hooked

INSTANT EXPERT

Only 22 games were ever officially released for the system. Of those 22, 19 were released in Japan and 14 in North America.

The Virtual Boy was never officially released in Europe.

Nintendo spent a whopping $25 million attempting to promote the machine in the US.

Ironically for a system that only has 22 games in total, the Virtual Boy has two versions of *Tetris*: *3D Tetris* and *V-Tetris*.

On the Japanese version of the machine, the connector which would have enabled the link cable to be used is called the 'EXT port'. However, on the US model it is accompanied by the words 'Play Link'.

Although the Virtual Boy's twin D-pad setup was revolutionary at the time, only three titles (*Red Alarm*, *3D Tetris* and *Teleroboxer*) made proper use of both pads.

The eyepiece of the Virtual Boy is made of neoprene and can be removed for cleaning.

The Virtual Boy's stand is notoriously fragile and second-hand units often display cracks in the plastic that holds the legs in place.

Only 140,000 units were sold in the US, with 630,000 making their way into Japanese homes (and probably the back of the cupboard not long after that).

Nintendo advised parents that children under the age of seven should not be allowed to play the Virtual Boy – apparently the 3D effect could damage their still-developing eyes.



» A small selection of games for the Virtual Boy – in total, only 22 titles were ever released for it.



» This one-off edition of *Virtual Boy Tsushin* magazine was produced to commemorate the launch of the console in Japan.

to your PC and then you'd slide your head over to the Virtual Boy itself to look in and see what your change did, then you'd move your head back over to your PC screen, recompile and repeat the process."

The Virtual Boy hit American store shelves in August 1995 and it was welcomed by the same consumer apathy that greeted its launch in Japan. Nintendo of America tried to remain confident and boasted of a complete sell-out; however, what the company failed to disclose was that many of the larger electronics chains had taken as little as two units per store. As if to confirm the lacklustre retail performance of the console, the price was swiftly slashed from $180 to $159 before dropping to an official RRP of $99 in May 1996. When this failed to shift stock, stores took it upon themselves to drastically discount the system and it has been reported that Virtual Boys were changing hands for as little as $20 in some parts of the US. In total just 800,000 units had found their way into the homes of gamers worldwide – way short of Yamauchi's modestly predicted 3 million, and as you might expect, such dire performance in the Japan and US effectively destroyed any chance of a European release. It was a disaster of truly epic proportions and the impact it had on Nintendo's status in the videogame industry was considerable.

Of course, someone had to take the blame and that person was Gunpei Yokoi. The man who had generated untold wealth for Nintendo thanks to an astonishing string of high-profile successes (including the Game & Watch series and the Game Boy) found that his reputation was in tatters and rumours suggest that he was treated like an outcast within the walls of Nintendo's Japanese HQ. He took the failure of the console incredibly personally and left the company under a cloud in August 1996 to form his own studio (an seismic act that caused nervous traders to offload Nintendo shares so vigorously that the Tokyo Stock Exchange had to cease trading), which would go on to collaborate with Bandai on the Game Boy rival WonderSwan. Sadly he never saw the latter machine make it to the market – he was tragically killed in a roadside accident in 1997. He was 56 years old.

Although coming up with an explanation for the failure of the Virtual Boy seems simple enough, many of the reasons behind its poor performance are more subtle than you might otherwise expect. "I think the antisocial nature of the machine was the main issue," comments Plumb. "In my opinion, even with a full-colour display and fantastically powerful 3D hardware, users would be reluctant to accept it as a day-to-day system because of that." Woita has his own take on the fiasco: "I'd go into a toy store and see the Virtual Boy display set up and nine out of ten times it would be broken, so point of purchase wasn't working for it and the only way you can really sell this unit is to try it first hand; TV commercials couldn't do the machine justice because the TV couldn't show the Virtual Boy's cool 3D capability."

The console lasted less than a year before Nintendo unceremoniously switched off the life support, and bearing in mind that most videogame hardware doesn't really hit its stride until at least a couple of years into its life span, is it possible that the Virtual Boy could have improved, had it been given opportunity to shine? "Most definitely," insists Woita. "The whole Virtual Boy development community at the time was cutting their teeth on their first round of games. It takes a few years to start figuring out tricks that allow you to squeeze the most out of a given platform."

Despite the negative reputation that the machine has, it's surprising to find that those who have had the chance to work with it have positive things to say. "The Virtual Boy was a fantastic piece of technology," says Woita. "We just started to scratch the surface of what could be done and I was really excited about creating games in what I would call closer to real 3D then we 'see' now."

Over the years Nintendo's attitude towards its unwanted child has warmed slightly; the Virtual Boy has made some notable appearances in the *WarioWare* series (Virtual Boy title *Mario Clash* is one of the mini-games in the Game Boy Advance version, for example). The machine itself is now a highly valued collector's item amongst dedicated Nintendo aficionados and merely owning one grants you entry to the upper echelon of fandom. It may have been a non-starter but there is one thing you simply cannot deny when talking about the Virtual Boy: it was a truly unique experience, the likes of which we may never see again.

Thanks to videogameimports.com for supplying the hardware and software used to create this feature.

VIRTUALLY THE SAME



Incredibly, the Virtual Boy has been emulated by industrious coders whose creations actually offer a fairly good impression of what it's like to play the real thing. "The best known and most up-to-date emulator these days is 'Reality Boy' by David Tucker," explains Planet Virtual Boy's Christian Radke. "It offers pretty high compatibility, some debug features and even rudimentary emulation of the EXT Link Port over TCP/IP. The official Link Cable has never been released and therefore no commercial games support it, but there are some homebrew games which do so and more will follow. The 3D effect can be replicated in several ways on the emulator. You can use Shutter Glasses, a CyberScope, over/under or side-by-side goggles, or a wide range of two-colour 3D goggles, like red/blue. Nothing comes close enough to the 3D of the Virtual Boy, though, so most people prefer the real thing."



» Another abstract advert for the Virtual Boy. Note the complete absence of screenshots.



» The Virtual Boy's stand was notoriously fragile, so many second-hand models will have cracks.

THE MAKING OF...

FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD

How do you turn a pop group into a computer game? Relax and let programmer John Gibson and graphic artist Ally Noble explain how to create a Spectrum classic from one of the biggest bands of the Eighties. Paul Drury hears about the pleasure and the pain...

IN THE KNOW

- **» PUBLISHER:** OCEAN
- **» DEVELOPER:** DENTON DESIGNS
- **» RELEASED:** 1985
- **» PLATFORMS:** SPECTRUM, C64, AMSTRAD CPC
- **» GENRE:** POP ART ADVENTURE
- **» EXPECT TO PAY:** £5

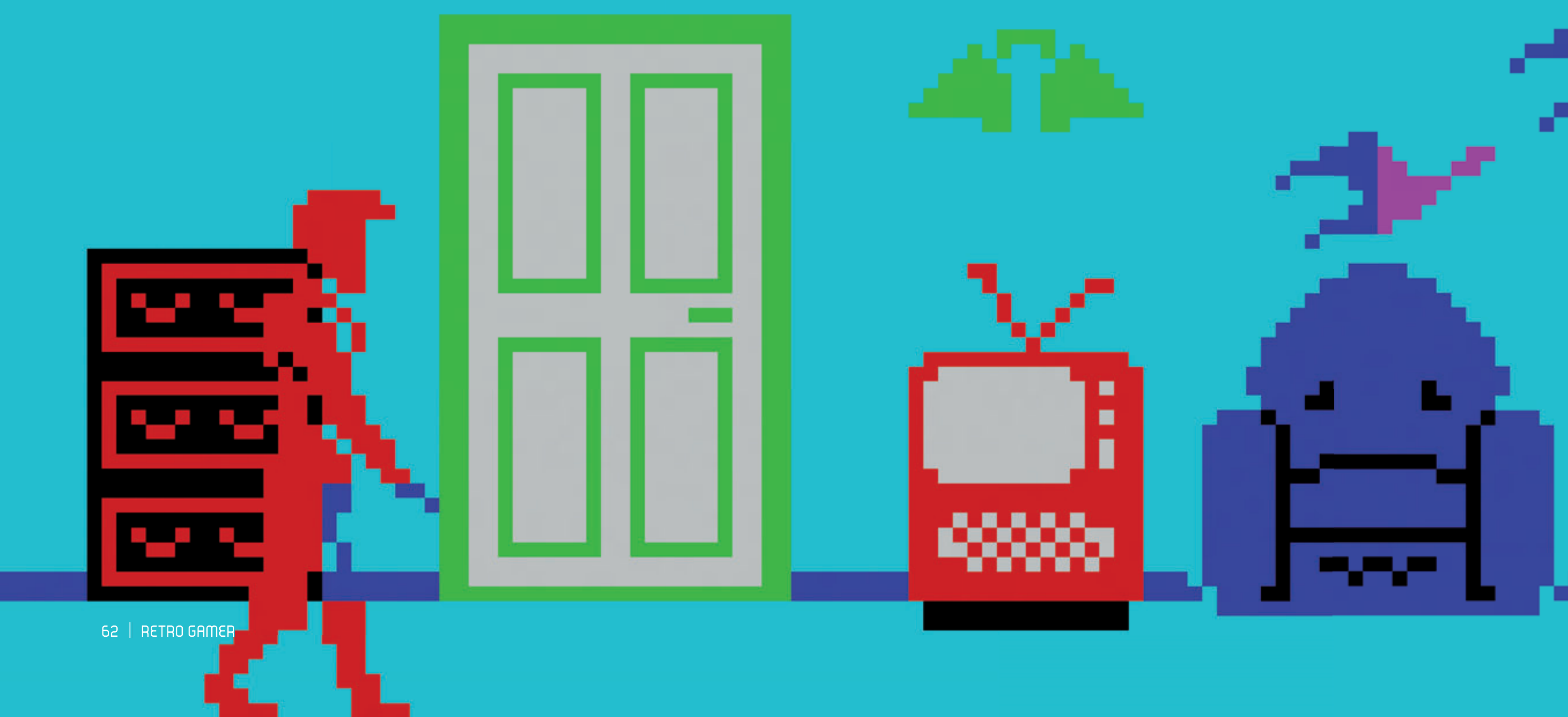
"When Dave Ward first told us that he had the *Frankie Goes To Hollywood* licence, our mouths just dropped open," recalls John Gibson of the moment when the boss of Ocean Software shared his idea of basing a game on the then rising stars of British pop. "We said, what on earth have you done that for? What kind of game can you have based on a rock band?"

"I remember being excited," adds Ally Noble. "I saw them at Larks in the Park the year before and we all knew they were going to the next big thing. But the problem was, where do you start?"

But then the gang at Denton Designs, who Ocean approached to handle the project, were used to getting themselves out of tricky situations. Ally and John had been working on the infamous *Bandersnatch* for Imagine Software when the bailiffs arrived to signal the Liverpool-based company's ignominious end and had to make a sharp exit down some backstairs, with their computers tucked under their arms. They regrouped with other escapees at the house of their former Imagine boss Dave Lawson and continued to work on the ill-fated mega-game, until, disillusioned with Lawson's lack of progress in finding a possible publisher, they chose to go it alone and formed Denton Designs in 1984.

The famous five of Ally, John, Steve Cain, Karen Davies and Graham 'Kenny' Everett soon caught the eye of Ocean and Beyond, for whom they delivered *Gift From The Gods* and *Shadowfire* respectively. The critical and commercial success of both, coupled with the leftfield thinking evident in their game design, helps to explain why Ward approached the team in early 1985 with his rather bizarre acquisition.

"Ocean were heavily into doing licensed games," notes John. "Clearly, if you put something on a box that everyone knew about, like a film, people seemed to buy it regardless of whether it was any good or not. Dave said we could do what we like, just as long as we didn't have lots of little Frankies



running around! We thought it was crazy but then we sat down and started talking and thinking about it."

"We looked at the record covers and talked about the concepts and what we could do with them," recalls Ally of those early brainstorming sessions spent poring over Frankie's 12-inch singles. "I think a lot was just stabs in the dark. We all liked the idea of a central core and mini-games, though…"

That central core was to be a row of four terraced houses. Behind each door lies apparent domestic normality. A kettle sits on the kitchen table. There's milk in the fridge. A comfy armchair snuggles next to the telly in the lounge. The rooms are full of Eighties period detail – a VHS recorder sits under the box, a flak jacket hangs in the hall and above the fireplace, in a sweet nod to the Ogdens' *Coronation Street* home, three plaster ducks adorn the wall. Yet as your shadowy avatar wanders through this scene of suburban ordinariness, you discover things wholly extraordinary. Like, what's a 'pleasure pill' – which worryingly resembles a cock-ring and promises to 'double your pleasure' – doing next to that pint of full fat in the fridge?

"That's supposed to be two sperm," giggles Ally. "It was one of the four symbols that the band had on one of their record sleeves. I remember distinctly we were talking about what we were going to do about the hero and 'lives' and it was my idea of using the man in the Frankie logo as a

"When Dave Ward of Ocean told us he had got the Frankie Goes To Hollywood licence, we said, what on earth have you done that for?"

shadow. It was a natural step of having those attributes – love, war, sex and religion – and turning them into something you used in the game, like life or energy. That's what really kicked off the idea of the game being about becoming a real person."

"That was Liverpool at the time," adds John. "People leading crap lives but there was always light at the end of the tunnel. Ally was a typical Scouser socialist. The idea of a game where you start off as a meaningless non-entity, one of the down-trodden masses, and become something wonderful, that's her all over."

This juxtaposition of the normal with the distinctly abnormal was most evident when you slipped behind the mundane interior of the houses into one of the surreal mini-games. Pop a cassette into the video recorder or give a saucer of milk to a thirsty cat and a strange window opens onto another world: a world of floating holes, German bombers and spitting Presidents.

"Someone said, could you could walk into the window? I always said that anything was possible, even if it wasn't, and nine times out of ten I managed to implement it," grins John. "I was the coder and someone else did the design. It's always been like that for me."

It was this matching up of inventive game design with the technical talent to realise it that was crucial to Denton's success. The team had pioneered the concept of an icon-driven adventure with *Shadowfire*. *Frankie* developed this idea further by combining it with a new sort of interface that allowed the player to open up a window to display their inventory and click on a graphical representation of the item they wished to use. They could even guide their shadow into a small window and watch it expand to fill the whole screen. Remember, these were the days when DOS was still the norm for PCs. Does this mean Microsoft ripped off your idea for their operating system, John?

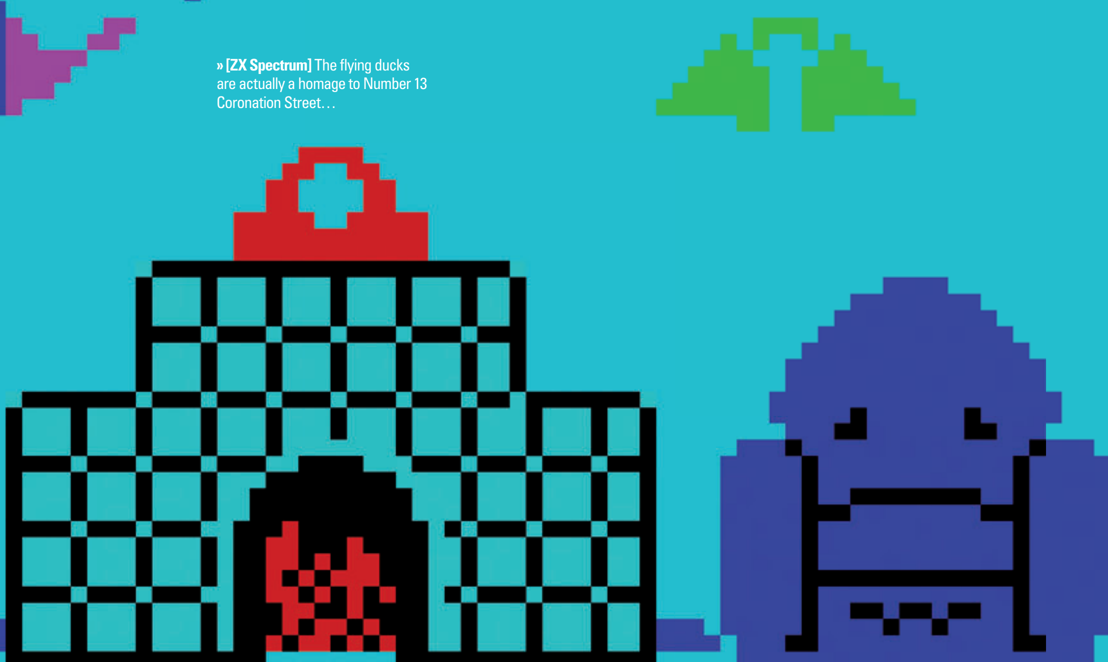
"No, Bill Gates doesn't owe me any royalties," he chuckles. "The inspiration was

» [ZX Spectrum] It's amazing what you can find in Frankie's fridge…





» [ZX Spectrum] The flying ducks are actually a homage to Number 13 Coronation Street…



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

GIFT FROM THE GODS
SYSTEM: SPECTRUM
YEAR: 1984

SHADOWFIRE
SYSTEM: SPECTRUM/C64
YEAR: 1985

THE GREAT ESCAPE (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: SPECTRUM/C64/AMSTRAD
YEAR: 1986



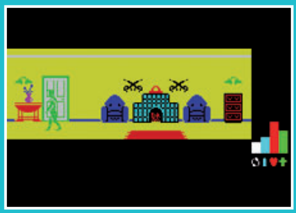


Frankie Goes to **Holyhead**

Whilst John, Ally and Steve Cain – who tragically died of cancer in 2006 – worked on *Frankie* for Sinclair's Spectrum, the Commodore 64 version was handled by coder Graham 'Kenny' Everett and graphic artist Karen Davies.

"We were all part of the design meetings," explains Ally, "but then Kenny would go back to Wales for a week or two and do his own thing. Was there any rivalry? Oh yeah! John, Steve and I saw the Speccy version as the lead one and wanted ours to be the biggest and best. Was it? Oh yes, because the Spectrum is a nicer machine! You fall into one of two camps, don't you?, and I was a Spectrum person."

"To all intents and purposes, they were different projects," continues John. "We were quite independent teams. We talked about techniques, Kenny and I, but they were very much separate entities. Of course, the 64 had no colour clash because it had a sensible video RAM, but I think the windows didn't work so easily, as it only had a pokey little 6502 processor. Apart from that, though, it was pretty much the same game on each machine. I think the Speccy version got to number 2 and the 64 got to number 1, which was a bit annoying for us!"



» [ZX Spectrum] When pirates finally retire…



» [ZX Spectrum] Be nice to animals and they'll lead you to some interesting places.

actually a pre-Mac Apple machine that had windows you could make bigger and smaller. I just had to make it work on a Spectrum with a pokey little Z80 processor! I came up with that windows thing almost separately from *Frankie*. I was always trying to push the Spectrum technically, do something damn special to make it stand out, some technical wizardry, and it became part of the game."

John explains how he used tables to pre-process the clever effect, which was key to *Frankie*'s unique look and feel. Journalists in those pre-Microsoft Windows days described it as "like an iris opening", reiterating how ahead of the times the Denton gang were. They met regularly at their offices in Rodney Street, Liverpool, to banter about game design ideas and share progress, though the actual coding was often done by John when he got home in the evening.

The game progressed through the summer of 1985, until something quite unexpected happened. There was a murder. In the game, that is…

"That came out of one of those brainstorming sessions," Ally recalls. "We needed something to happen in the game! We were discussing *Cluedo*, I think. The murder was to counteract the suburban street. It looks normal from the outside but inside, extraordinary things are happening."

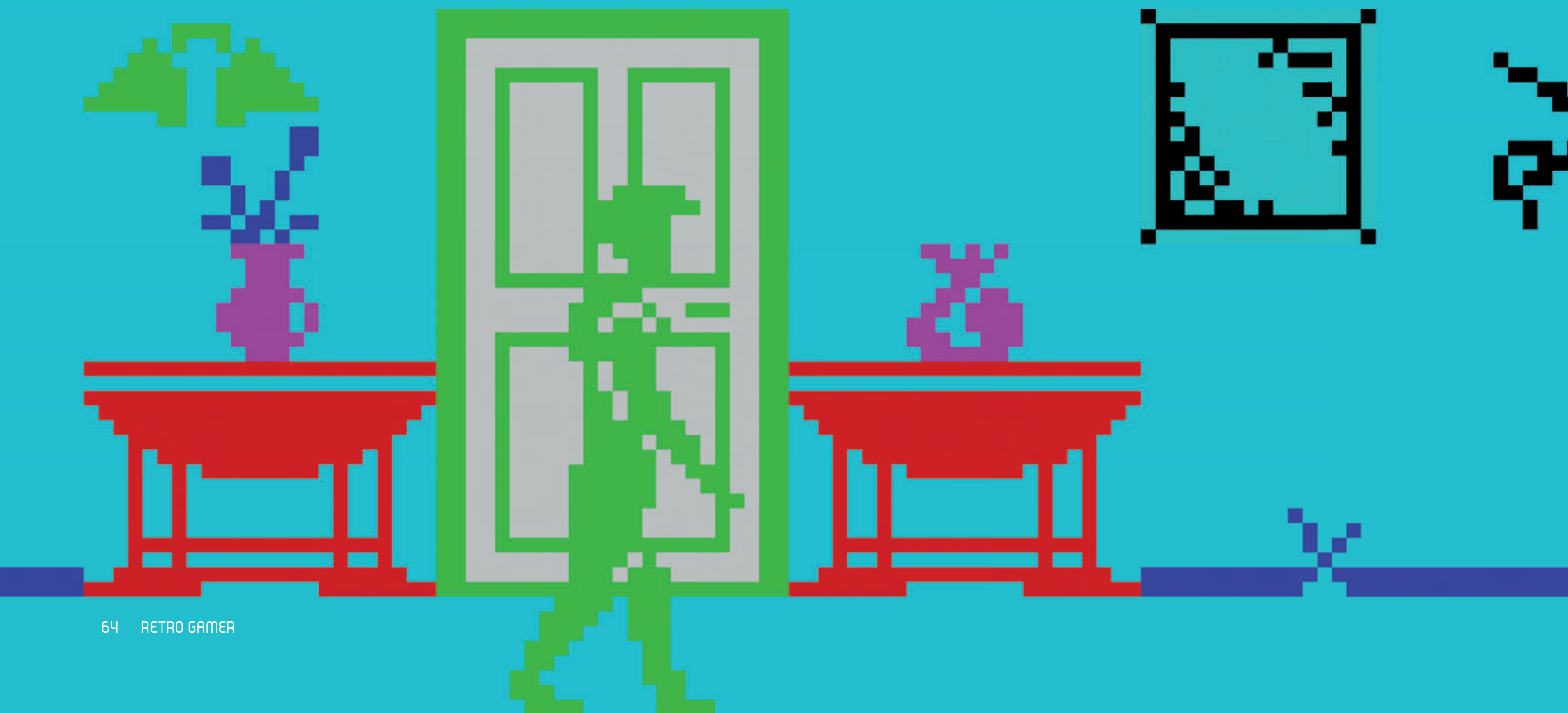
And so the shadow turns into a sleuth, tasked with solving the murder of Mrs Average, slain in her own home. The mystery involves uncovering 23 clues, which point to the identity of the killer, and then employing a little deduction. Thus, Mrs Bland, who we discover drives everywhere, can be ruled out once we are told the murderer has no car, and the teetotaller Mr Dull is in the clear when the culprit is revealed as enjoying a drop of red wine. It's hardly Agatha Christie, but the mystery provides an entertaining middle to the game's narrative and correctly naming the guilty party is especially satisfying. The murder plot also allowed the team to slip in a bit of political comment, when one of the clues states that 'Joe Public always votes Tory.'

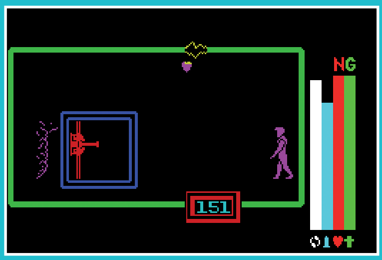
Ally laughs. "Yeah, none of us voted Tory. We were all quite socialist. Was it a political game? Look at it and see what you think. I think it's quite a socialist game and Frankie were quite a political band, in a light-hearted pop way. But then those were more political times. These days, people have been lulled into a false sense of security by their PlayStations."

Frankie certainly didn't mollycoddle the player. Though you were given regular feedback on your progress towards becoming a 'real' person in terms of a percentage, what was expected of you was not always clear. "We didn't want to tell the player too much," confirms Ally. "We thought there was a lot in those 12-inch sleeves and a lot going on around the band, so we wanted people to find stuff out for themselves. To use their brains, and think and try things."

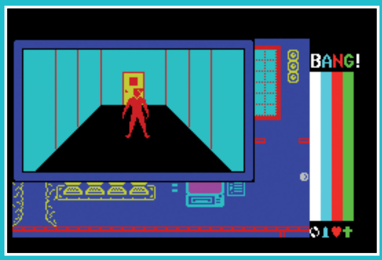
The game certainly asked a lot of the player and required much experimenting, backtracking and a fair amount of trial and

> **"The suburban street in Frankie looks normal from the outside but inside, extraordinary things are happening…"**





» [ZX Spectrum] Move your body in Cybernetic Breakout.



» [ZX Spectrum] Finally, the door to the Pleasuredome…

error to succeed. Even the goal of becoming a real person was left somewhat ambiguous, as John explains. "We deliberately only let you get 99%! That was part of Frankie Goes To Hollywood's philosophy, I think. You could strive to be the perfect person but you never could be. Anyway, it was bloody hard to get that far!"

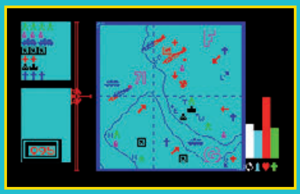
The game was indeed a challenging experience, particularly navigating the incredibly convoluted maze that led to your ultimate destination, the Pleasuredome. It could be a rather garish experience too, thanks to the Spectrum's notorious colour-clash problems. "The only way you can get round that is like with the Ultimate games, which were effectively line drawings, black and white or colour and white," sighs John. "We decided it was much better to use all the Spectrum's colours, even if you got that horrible clash. Most Spectrum users got used to it. The machine was badly designed… but that didn't stop it selling bucket loads."

And nor did it stop *Frankie* doing excellent business, sales perhaps boosted by the inclusion of a live version of the single *Relax* as part of the package. A hit with gamers, we wonder whether the band was equally as impressed with the final release? "Paul Morley, their manager, took us to see them play right near the end of development," remembers Ally. "It was in Liverpool, they were at the height of their fame and it was absolutely mad, a fantastic gig. We heard from their record label, ZTT, that they liked the game but I don't think any of the members actually played it. Before they were famous, Holly Johnson used to hang out with the fashion students at the art college I studied at and I used to go to gay clubs with Paul Rutherford. He was a great dancer. He used to wear denim jeans and a leather jacket and had this red scarf hanging out his back pocket.'

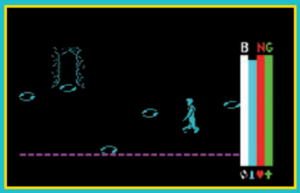
Paul would surely have been chuffed that the Denton crew made such a good fist of the Frankie licence. Ally and John certainly look back fondly on those five hectic months creating such an unusual title. "It was the best time ever," confirms John, who has agreed to be a future Desert Island Disks castaway feature in Retro Gamer and share more of his memories of those heady days. "I still enjoy what I do but it was much more fun back then. No suits, no business pressures, really. A really good time."

"It was a good project," agrees Ally. "It was exciting working on something that grew and evolved, a group of people brainstorming that took it along each week. It was so open-ended, we could do whatever we wanted. And we did!"

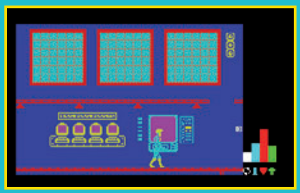
Through the Square Window: Our Five Favourite Frankie Mini-Games



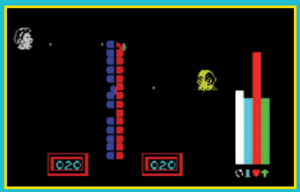
Raid Over Merseyside
An 8-bit re-imagining of Liverpudlian 'comic' Stan Boardman's 'De German Fokkers' gag, this little blaster had you defending Merseyside from aerial assault. John: "I think that was one of Steve's ideas. As cheeky as he always was. He'd say that if anyone bombed Britain, they'd bomb Liverpool first to get rid of all the Scousers!"



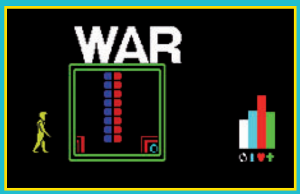
Sea Of Holes
Frustrating hole-hopping, as you try to time your emergence from a floating pit to reach the elusive gateway. John: "It was a rip-off of an old Imagine game, a simple platformer with these horizontal lines you had to avoid or drop through. I remember it was more bloody tables. You had to mask things out when you disappeared down the holes."



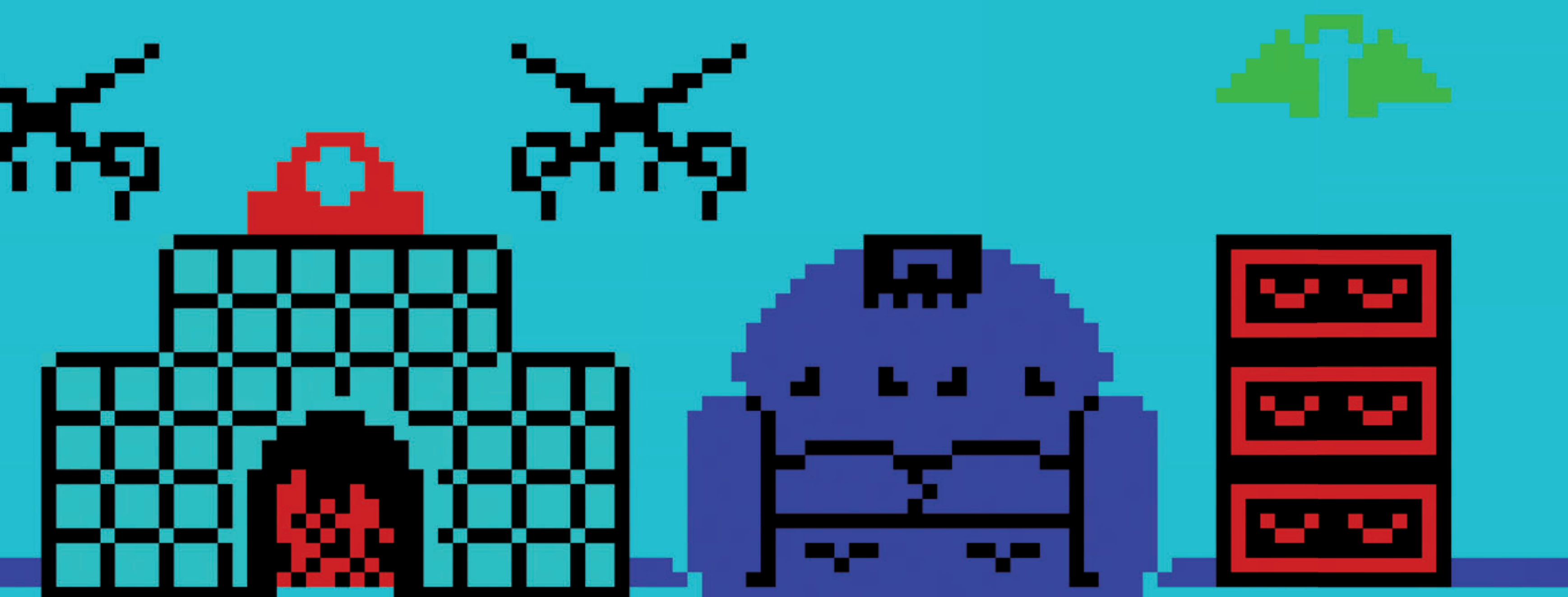
Terminal Room
Slip floppy disks found into computer terminals to access further rooms to explore. Ally: "That was a homage to *Impossible Mission* on the 64. We played it at Imagine, I think, and all really liked it, especially Steve. It was probably his idea, that one." Sometimes the disks don't work, a knowing wink at the unreliability of technology at the time, apparently.



Talking Heads
Presidents Reagan and Andropov spit at each other over a *Breakout*-style destructible wall. Ally: "That was based on the *Two Tribes* video and was my favourite one." Reagan also features in the Shooting Gallery mini-game, where he's joined by Margaret Thatcher, Arthur Scargill and Andy Warhol as pop-up targets. Happy days.



War Room
A particularly surreal screen, featuring snippets of other mini-games spewing forth symbols for you to blast with your arm-cum-gun. John: "Having windows pop up with rooms behind them was a piece of piss once all the technical milestones had been met. The code was all there already. Was it a bit weird? The whole bloody thing was a bit odd."



QUEDEX

NOT JUST A LOAD OF BALLS



- » **PUBLISHER:** THALAMUS PUBLISHING
- » **RELEASED:** 1987
- » **GENRE:** ARCADE
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** C64
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** A FEW QUID



HISTORY

Despite being bestowed with numerous awards when released – including a Zzap! Sizzler, a C&VG Hit and a Commodore User Screen Star – *Quedex* is today a largely forgotten minor classic from the C64's vast gaming catalogue. Only in light of modern-day videogaming is it clear how prescient the 8-bit Thalamus title was.

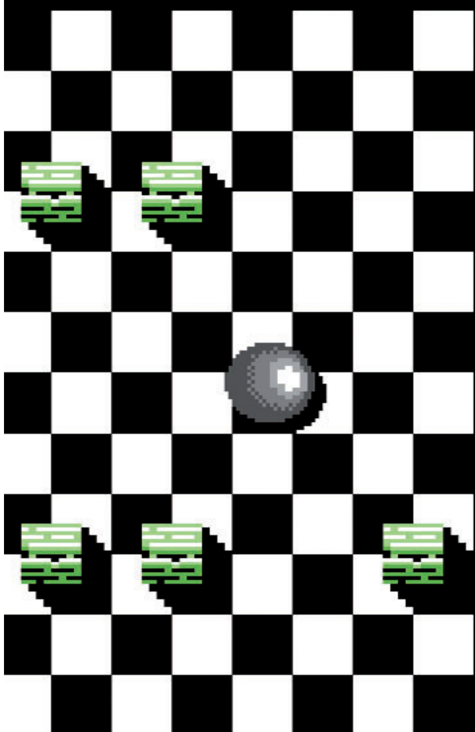
Fresh from shoot-'em-up hits *Sanxion* and *Delta*, Finnish programmer Stavros Fasoulas served up something decidedly different for his third title. *Quedex* – or *The Quest For Ultimate Dexterity*, to give the game its full title – tasks you with steering a metal ball around ten levels in a race against the clock. (Oddly, US licensee Epyx replaced the metallic ball with a Magic 8-Ball in one of the conversions, and a squidgy rolling eyeball in the 16-bit releases dubbed *Mindroll*, although the core gameplay remained unchanged.)

What sets *Quedex* apart and makes it perhaps more relevant today than it was in the 1980s is its quick-fire mini-game format: one minute, you're careering downhill in a manic slalom, trying to avoid time-sapping electrified columns; the next you're traversing a maze, grabbing keys and avoiding skulls, feverishly searching for the 'goal' to complete the plane and earn a much-needed time bonus. Elsewhere, your spheroid avatar is sucked through tubes, dropped into a tile-switching game, faced with elevated platforms, flung through teleporters and tasked with finding the single route through a maze with collapsing floors.

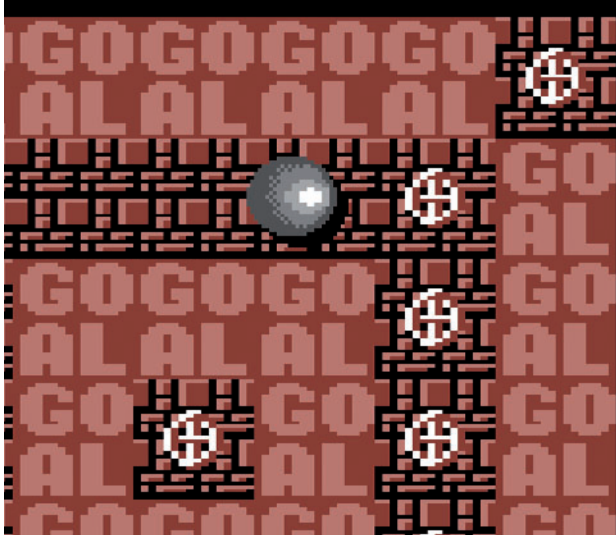
The ability to switch levels at will, the pace of the game (with the clock ever ticking downwards) and the sheer challenge of it mean that *Quedex* today comes across like a mix of *Marble Madness* and *WarioWare*, with the occasional nod to *Gauntlet* and *Trailblazer*. Reactions and reflexes are of paramount importance, as are quick thinking and a strong memory. And so if you're the kind of person who completes a *Super Mario* game without blinking, try *Quedex* and see if you really do possess ultimate dexterity.

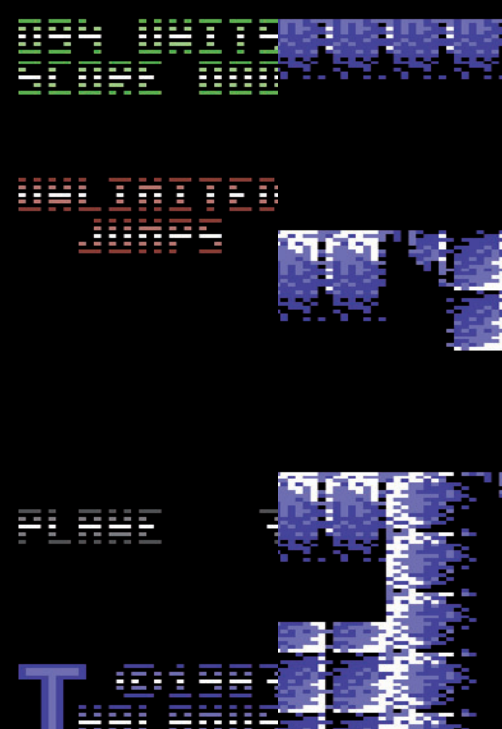













+02
PTS
UNLIMITED
JUMPS
PLANE
NO
JUMPS
PLANE
NO
JUMPS
UNLIMITED
JUMPS
PLANE



RETRO GAMER DIGS UP THE FILES OF THE CLASSIC COMPANIES OF OLD

Beyond - Challenging Software

It's best known for the excellent Lords of Midnight games that were created by Mike Singleton, but there's so much more to publisher Beyond Software, as Richard Hewison reveals…

Terry Pratt was working for magazine publisher EMAP when the idea of setting up a videogames company was first suggested.

"I was the editor for *Computer & Video Games* magazine from its launch in 1981, and a few years later I had the idea that we might be able to create a software company," remembers Terry. "I then sold that idea to a number of boards at EMAP and initially set it up with Marcus Rich, who was a marketing manager at EMAP. Marcus helped part-time and then Bill Delaney, who was working as advertising manager for one of EMAP's other computer magazines at the time, stepped in."

With Bill Delaney concentrating on the sales side, Terry was tasked with looking after content, which included coming up with a name for the publishing label.

"I agonised for weeks over a name before choosing Beyond, but I now can't remember any of those that were rejected."

Terry initially met with a number of developers in an effort to get titles on the books, including a meeting with English teacher Mike Singleton.

"Mike and I had been putting together completely stupid and weird game ideas for *Computer & Video Games* magazine for a couple of years so we got to know each other quite well."

The management team also needed to recruit a few additional faces, as Terry recalls.

"Simon Goodwin was one of the first. Technically he was our resident programmer, although we actually sourced our games from outside."

Simon remembers with great affection how he became involved back in 1983.

"I used to write or convert games for publishing in *Computer & Video Games* magazine," he explains. "Terry approached me to join as software manager, primarily to assess new games and liaise with programmers for conversions, but I also looked after cassette production and I managed and sometimes assisted program development as well."

Other staff quickly followed at Beyond, including the hiring of Francis Lee as sales manager, poached from another part of EMAP.

"I had been working in advertising sales at EMAP for their electronic online division called Micronet800, and then for a magazine called *Computing & Electronics Monthly*," remembers Francis. Six very successful months later, Francis was approached by Bill Delaney to discuss the possibility of joining Beyond.

"At this time it was a relatively new company with a small team jointly run by Bill and Terry Pratt. I liked what I saw in the people involved and really felt that this would be a challenging opportunity working with a group of fun people."

Mary Linehan became part of the small but perfectly formed Beyond team when she was hired as Bill Delaney's PA, but she eventually became a marketing assistant and so Jane Shillington was brought in as PA to replace her.

Branding Beyond

Beyond had a very strong and iconic packaging design and corporate logo thanks to the efforts of design agency Red Pencil.

INSTANT EXPERT

Almost all of Beyond's early titles were written by programmers who had previously had games published in C&VG magazine (Pat Norris, Mike Singleton, Ron Potkin, Simon Goodwin).

***SS Achilles* for** the 48K Atari was only available on floppy disk because the programmers disliked the Atari cassette deck so much.

***Psytron* and *The** Lords Of Midnight* on the 48K Spectrum had reciprocating demos on side B of the cassettes. *Psytron*'s was partly playable, whilst *The Lords of Midnight*'s was a slideshow which featured more text on screen than the published version of the game.

***Star Trek: The** Rebel Universe* did exist on the Spectrum (coded by Anthony Taglione) and the Amstrad CPC (coded by Timothy Walter), but neither version was playable beyond switching between the characters on the bridge.

Bill Delaney was also a magician, and would often perform magic tricks for colleagues on quiet Friday afternoons.

Superman: The Game was converted to the Spectrum (coded by Anthony Taglione) and the Amstrad CPC but was distributed by Prism Leisure and published 'by Telecomsoft' after Beyond had been sold to BT.

Beyond published a stand-alone 'Shadowfire Tuner' utility, which allowed players to tweak the game to suit themselves.



SPELLBOUND



"I can remember having endless meetings with Red Pencil as to the way forward with the packaging," says Terry. One element that the design agency was very keen on was a robot with a Viking-style helmet and the Beyond rising sun logo on its chest. The robot became part of the highly recognisable Beyond 'look', along with the striking orange sun logo. The distinctive yellow cardboard slip-cases were introduced soon after the first handful of releases to accommodate the larger manuals, novellas and keyboard overlays that were yet to come.

Early Titles

With the initial team in place, work continued on the first few releases, including Spectrum arcade games *Spellbound* and *Space Station Zebra* (both written by Pat Norris) and Paul Jay's Commodore 64 arcade game *Goodness Gracious*. Ron Potkin's *Kriegspiel* and *Up Periscope* for the short-lived Dragon 32 and Simon Goodwin's own 48K Atari game *SS Achilles*, co-written with David Muncer, rounded off Beyond's early release schedule.

Psytron

The first title that Simon Goodwin looked at in his role as software manager was *Psytron*, written for the 48K Spectrum by engineering graduates Paul Voysey and Tayo Olowu and later converted to the Commodore 64. *Psytron* was a complex sci-fi strategy game played over a number of levels.

"I thought *Psytron* was excellent," remembers Simon. "It was very much what I believed Beyond should be publishing. The rest of the team liked it too," as Terry Pratt confirms…

"*Psytron* did really well for us. It was up there with *The Lords Of Midnight* and *Doomdark's Revenge*. Those three titles were very important in our first year or so."

> **"Psytron was very much what I believed Beyond should be publishing"** SIMON GOODWIN, SOFTWARE MANAGER

Paul Voysey and Tayo Olowu went on to create a second game for Beyond called *Psi-Warrior* on the Commodore 64, which was more action-orientated.

Landscaping Genius

Whilst the first few titles were being released, Mike Singleton was busy working away on his epic fantasy wargame *The Lords Of Midnight* for the 48K Spectrum. The title was an astonishing technical achievement and was also an incredibly absorbing game in its own right.

The story of Luxor the Moon Prince, his son Morkin, Rorthron the Wise and Corleth the Fey's battle against Doomdark instantly became a huge hit on the Spectrum, and deservedly so. It raised Beyond's profile again and set the bar for all the other Beyond releases that were to follow it. Reviews were universal in their praise, and the game won a slew of awards.

Spies like US

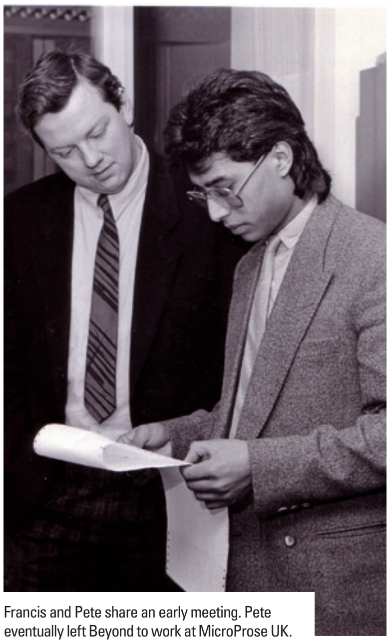
Terry Pratt made a decision very early on to source some 'ready-made' games from the United States. Beyond therefore licensed a handful of Commodore 64 titles for publication in the UK, including *MyChess II*, *Mr Robot And His Robot Factory*, and *Ankh* from Datamost.

The best of the US bunch was undoubtedly *Spy Vs Spy*, licensed from First Star. Based upon a comic strip from the satirical US magazine *MAD*, the *Spy Vs Spy* game involved two spies (Black and White) who had to explore a foreign embassy in a race against the clock. The ultimate goal was to grab a top-secret briefcase and be the first to escape via an airplane on the roof.

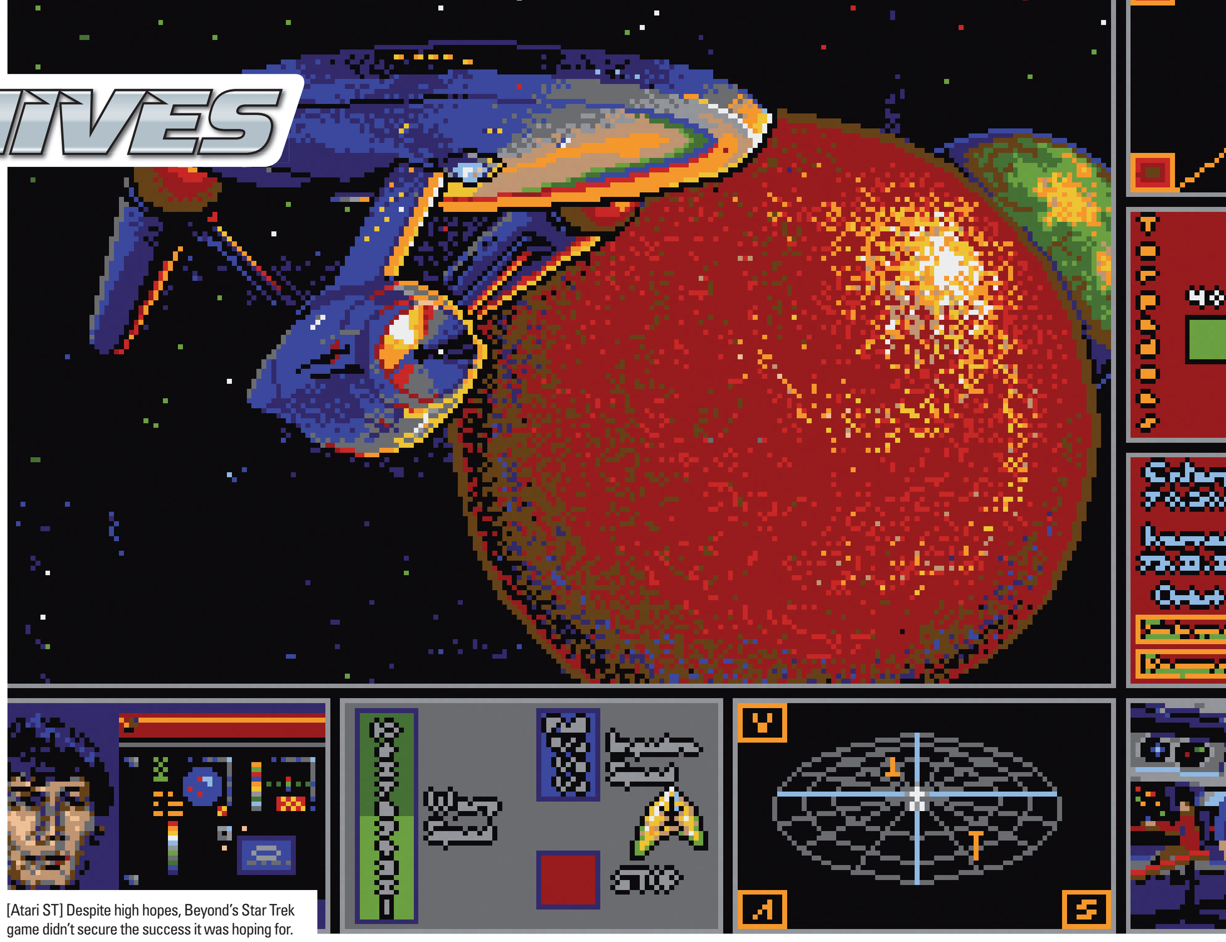
The game featured a split-screen view for both spies and could be played

BY THE NUMBERS

- **19** Different titles released by Beyond whilst owned by EMAP
- **2** The number of years Beyond lasted under EMAP (1983-1985)
- **2** Number of times Beyond moved offices during its EMAP tenure
- **6** The number of months that the Monolith label lasted
- **8** Members of staff were employed by Beyond under EMAP
- **1** Number of Beyond educational titles (*Romper Room*)
- **2** Games published by Beyond for the Dragon 32 (*Kriegspiel* and *Up Periscope*)
- **1** The number of games Beyond licensed to Amsoft (*The Lords of Midnight* for the Amstrad CPC)
- **4** The Computer Gamer magazine issue which published the only known image relating to Mike Singleton's *Eye Of The Moon*
- **3** C64 Beyond games licensed for publication in the US by Mindscape, Inc
- **1 million** The amount in GBP that British Telecom was rumoured to have paid EMAP for Beyond in late 1985



Francis and Pete share an early meeting. Pete eventually left Beyond to work at MicroProse UK.



[Atari ST] Despite high hopes, Beyond's Star Trek game didn't secure the success it was hoping for.

simultaneously between two players – or one player against the computer – who would set traps for each other, and fight when in the same room.

"I thought that *Spy Vs Spy* was an absolutely stunning game," says Terry, "but unfortunately it was just too complex a marketing concept for us to successfully get it across. I particularly remember sitting in a room full of youngsters who just couldn't get the hang of it at all."

Despite these reservations, *Spy Vs Spy* met with critical success when Beyond released it for the Commodore 64 in 1984. Anthony Taglione and Malcolm Hellon (who worked for Incentive Software) were subcontracted by Beyond under their 'Tag and the Kid' moniker to write the Spectrum conversion, which was released the following year.

More Lords

"Tag and Malcolm worked well as a team," says Simon. "Tag was the Spectrum expert and Malcolm knew the Commodore 64, meaning they were good at converting games in either direction." They were therefore the obvious candidates to handle the Commodore 64 conversion of *The Lords Of Midnight*, which had been such a huge hit on the Spectrum the previous year.

> **"It was just too complex a marketing concept for us to get it across"** TERRY PRATT ON SPY VS SPY



Every publisher has a black sheep it doesn't like to discuss. Goodness Gracious is one of Beyond's.

"Mike Singleton had fresh ideas he wanted to pursue and he wasn't really interested in writing the conversion himself," says Simon. Those fresh ideas included writing *Doomdark's Revenge* – the much anticipated sequel – which was effectively more of the same but with a larger map and some extra enhancements. *Doomdark's* proved just as successful as its illustrious predecessor, and only whetted people's appetite for the planned concluding part of the trilogy, called *Eye Of The Moon*. Sadly, the third part was destined never to be completed as circumstances and other games continually got in the way.

A new recruit also began working at Beyond in 1984. Peter Moreland was hired to look after production, which freed Simon Goodwin to concentrate more on software development. Pete already had a good grounding in the industry, having worked for a tape and disk duplication company, and he also co-created the 8-bit text adventure *Mordon's Quest* (with Abersoft's John Jones-Steele) which was published by Melbourne House. Pete's skills eventually led him to become a project manager for Beyond.

Moving On

18 months after first suggesting the idea of setting up the company, Terry Pratt was offered a much bigger role heading up one of EMAP's magazine divisions. It was an offer he couldn't really refuse, and Bill Delaney

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Terry Pratt remained at EMAP for a number of years after Beyond, but these days he runs his own book business, publishing (amongst other things) the *Match Of The Day Football Yearbook*.

Simon Goodwin left Beyond shortly after the BT takeover and set up his own company. Today, Simon is a freelance web developer.

After leaving Beyond, **Mary Linehan** got a job working in public relations for Central TV. Mary is still involved in the world of PR today.

Francis Lee went to work for Twilight Software soon after Beyond, who published a number of 8-bit games thanks to a distribution and production deal with Ariolasoft. Later on, Francis ran a comic book shop for a while and these days he is a very successful comic book author, creating *Tales Of Midnight* and running a multimedia company called Beyond Twilight (don't those titles have a familiar ring to them?).

Pete Moreland went from Beyond to BT, then to MicroProse UK where he worked on some classic 16-bit titles. Pete has had many years of experience in games development, including helping to set up software developer Hothouse Creations.

Marc Peirson wrote the *Cholo* novella for Firebird, eventually left a career in sales behind him and returned to studying, gaining a Master's in film directing and producing. He has since written televised scripts for many well-known UK TV shows including *The Bill*, *Holby City*, *Doctors*, *Emmerdale* and *Eastenders*. He is also now a published novelist, with his second crime fiction novel *Blood Work* due out this year (published under the name Mark Pearson).

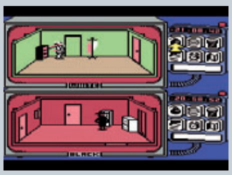
Unfortunately, the whereabouts of **Jane Shillington**, **Bill Delaney** and **Clive Bailey** are currently unknown.

SIX OF THE BEST

Psytron
Psytron has a number of screens that depict different sections of the base you are protecting from alien attack. Each screen offers a different strategic element, including a nifty first-person view tucked away in the bottom corner. The game includes resource management and a handful of different levels that became increasingly challenging. When most Spectrum games were still simplistic shoot-'em-ups or platformers, *Psytron* was sophisticated and smart.



Spy Vs Spy
This ingenious game was based on the cartoon from the popular US satirical magazine, *MAD*. It offers split-screen simultaneous two-player fun, as you both around a building trying to find items to collect before your opponent gets to them. Setting booby-traps for the other spy and fighting them off with a stick just adds to the mayhem – and all of this against the clock. Being able to configure the game yourself rounds off an excellent, clever title.

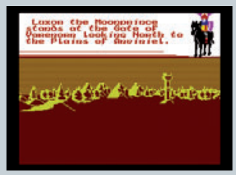


The Lords Of Midnight
Midnight looked unlike any other game on the market when it was released. It has a Tolkien-esque plot and impressive landscaping graphics that are drawn with barely any perceptible delay.

The player can jump between different characters in different locations and issue commands as they seek to stop the evil Doomdark and his army. A terrific wargame and the reason why the author of this article bought his Spectrum!



Doomdark's Revenge
Mike Singleton's sequel to *The Lords Of Midnight* might be more of the same with a few tweaks, but *Doomdark's Revenge* continues the enthralling fantasy story. The graphics look a little better than in its predecessor, but the quest to rescue Morkin is slightly easier than the original task, despite the larger map. Even so, *Doomdark's Revenge* is an absorbing and atmospheric game that is another sure-fire classic!

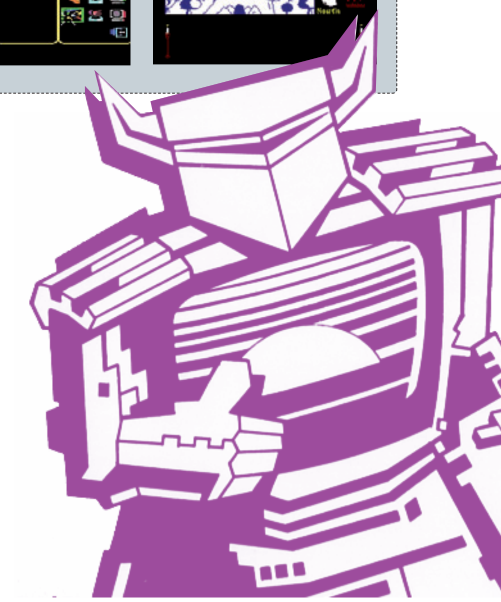


Shadowfire
Especially impressive on the Commodore 64, real-time space adventure *Shadowfire* made extensive use of icons – a trait that was to become Denton Design's trademark. The six different characters have specialist skills that each have to be brought into play at the right moment. The music is great, the interface is slick and the graphics are impressive for the time. In hindsight, *Shadowfire* was probably Denton's first and best game for Beyond.



Sorderon's Shadow
Unfairly dismissed by some at the time as a simple *Lords Of Midnight* wannabe, *Sorderon's Shadow* added an extra dimension to the proceedings by including a text input feature to appeal to text adventure players. Yet it was presented in a style likely to entice fans of both *Midnight* games as well, with its landscaped environment. It wasn't everyone's cup of tea, and it was quite a tough game too, but the good points easily outweigh the bad.





succeeded him, ensuring continuity and minimum disruption.

Denton Designs
Denton Designs was a development company formed from the still smouldering ashes of the original Imagine label. Steve Cain had been very impressed with *The Lords Of Midnight*, and a half-hour conversation with Bill Delaney convinced him that Denton should be working with Beyond.

The first fruits of their labour came with the release of *Shadowfire*, which was the first of an initial two-product deal. According to the back of the box, *Shadowfire* was the 'first adventure game without text'. It made extensive use of icons and was a slick-looking action-strategy game.

Shadowfire required the player to fully utilise the different skills provided by the six members of the Enigma team, as they moved through General Zoff's spaceship in search of the captured Ambassador Kryxix.

The game was released in mid-1985 with the Commodore 64 version on one side of the cassette, and the Spectrum version on the other. This dual-format approach was repeated twice more, when Beyond published the Amstrad CPC version of *Spy Vs Spy* with the Atari 48K version on the flip side; and when the 48K Spectrum and Commodore 64 versions of the educational title *Romper Room* were put together in the same box.

Shadowfire proved to be another hit for Beyond, who seemingly could do no wrong at that time. Denton immediately started work on a sequel called *Enigma Force*, which was more real-time in its approach and used a different graphical perspective from its predecessor. The game still used an icon interface, but it wasn't quite as impressive or successful when it was released in early 1986.

Denton's next game for Beyond was *Bounces*, which was a simple but fun future sports game. Unfortunately it proved to be more palatable to the public a few years later as a budget game rather than at full price.

Infodroid was Denton's penultimate game for Beyond. It was an arcade-strategy game available for the Commodore 64 and the Amstrad CPC, involving robots, but it failed to capture gamers' imaginations.

Denton's final game for Beyond was an arcade adventure called *Dante's Inferno*, based on the famous 13th Century poem by Dante Alighieri. The game took a literal interpretation of the poem, with the player assuming the role of the pilgrim, travelling through the nine circles of hell.

MONOLITH
One of the first things Bill Delaney did after being placed in charge at Beyond was to introduce a second publishing label called Monolith. The idea was to have all adventure and strategy titles published by Beyond and the more arcade-style games to appear via the new Monolith label.

Unfortunately, not all of the Beyond staff were convinced by this argument – and neither were the retailers when they saw the packaging which was slim, tall, black with no artwork, no screenshots, and no name or logo on the side of the box to tell different Monolith titles apart. The box was also made from very flimsy cardboard which was easily crushed in transit.

The debut games for the new label were Mike Singleton's *Quake Minus One* for the Commodore 64, Denton Designs' *Bounces* and First Star's *Boulder Dash* sequel, *Rockford's Riot*, which was bundled with the original game as a bonus.

Monolith turned out to be an ill-conceived idea which was fated to have a very short life span thanks to EMAP's decision to sell Beyond to BT just six months later.





[C64] *Quake Minus One* was part of Beyond's offshoot label Monolith.

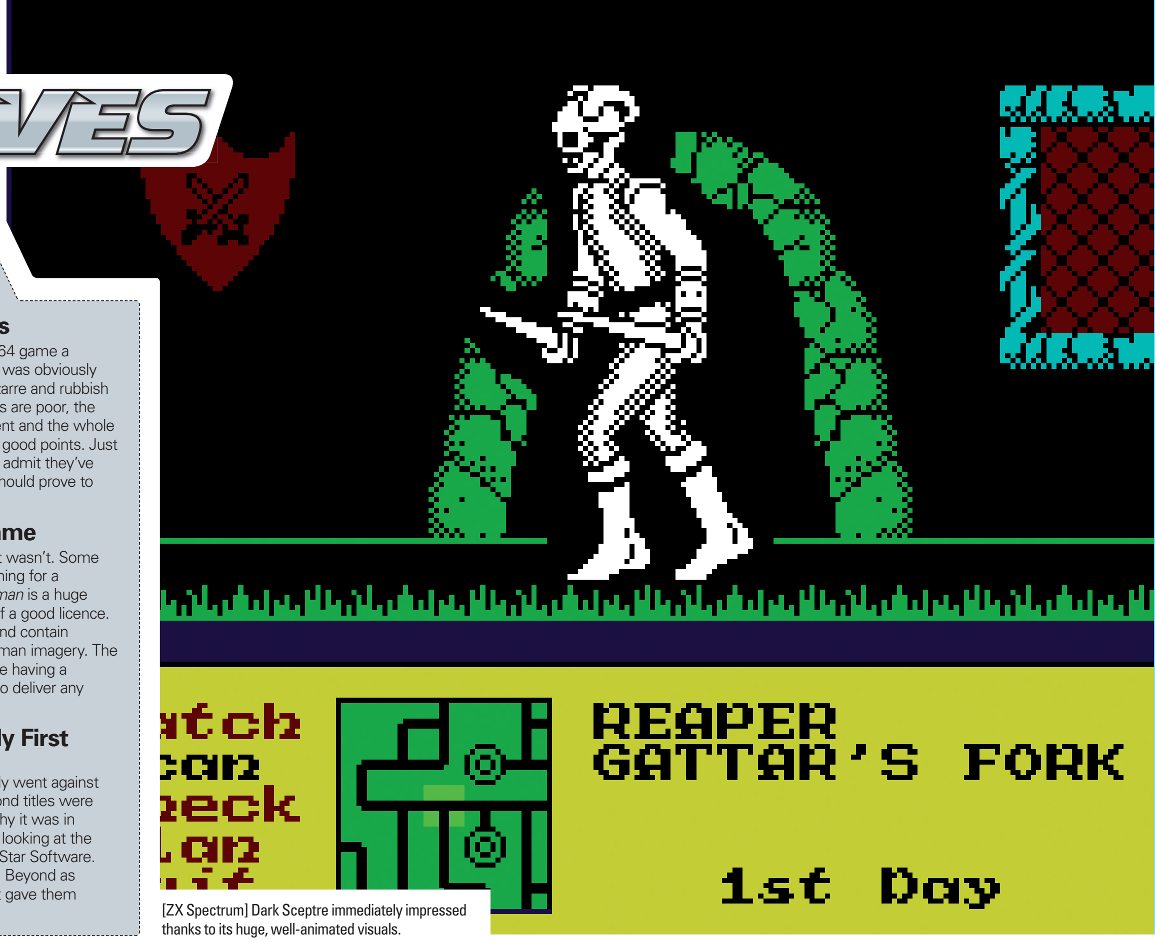
Shadowing Midnight
Teenagers Nick Eatock and Simon Welland began writing a Spectrum game called *Elindor* whilst they were still at high school in the mid Eighties, having been inspired by *The Lords Of Midnight*. They then turned up unannounced at Beyond's offices near Farringdon in London.

"We liked what we saw but it presented us with a problem, being so similar to *Lords Of Midnight*," remembers Simon Goodwin. "We didn't want Beyond to get typecast, so we gave it a lot of thought but decided it was good enough in its own right to be added to the range."

The game featured landscaping very similar to Mike Singleton's game, but featured rolling clouds and a text input interface to communicate with characters and enter typical adventure commands.

Beyond did make a couple of changes. Francis Lee changed the title to *Sorderon's Shadow* and another constructive suggestion was made to give the game a little more polish, as Nick Eatock elaborates: "The only other thing that changed were the graphics. Denton Designs did a great job on this and definitely lifted the product to another level."

FROM THE ARCHIVES



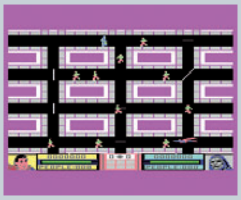
[ZX Spectrum] Dark Sceptre immediately impressed thanks to its huge, well-animated visuals.

ONES TO AVOID



Goodness Gracious

Giving this early Commodore 64 game a name like *Goodness Gracious* was obviously tempting fate. The game is bizarre and rubbish in equal measure. The graphics are poor, the gameplay is almost non-existent and the whole thing is painfully devoid of any good points. Just trying to find anyone willing to admit they've played it, let alone bought it, should prove to be difficult.



Superman: The Game

It could have been good, but it wasn't. Some people find the game entertaining for a short while, but overall *Superman* is a huge disappointment and a waste of a good licence. The graphics are tiny, blocky and contain almost no recognisable Superman imagery. The game itself is basic and despite having a handful of sub-games, it fails to deliver any satisfying gameplay.



Romper Room – My First Alphabet

This educational game certainly went against the grain as far as typical Beyond titles were concerned! A big clue as to why it was in Beyond's portfolio is found by looking at the name of the developer – First Star Software. *Romper Room* was foisted on Beyond as part of the publishing deal that gave them *Superman: The Game.*

Superman

Beyond's relationship with First Star in the US remained strong, and resulted in the publication of the Commodore 64 version of *Spy Vs Spy II: The Desert Island Caper* in late 1985. This also lead to Beyond signing a couple of additional titles, including *Rockford's Riot*, an educational title called *Romper Room – My First Alphabet* and *Superman*.

"We already had this good working relationship with First Star, and they were convinced that *Superman* was going to be a huge title for them", explains Terry Pratt. The rights to publish *Superman* in the UK were duly signed without anyone at Beyond seeing the game.

Selling Up

It was whilst *Superman* was being signed up that Beyond's ultimate fate was being discussed in EMAP's corridors of power. Although Terry Pratt had handed over the reins to Bill Delaney and was back in the fold at EMAP magazines by then, he remembers the corporate thinking at the time. "My magazine boss Gerry Murray decided that Beyond was too much of a distraction for the business and he wanted out," says Terry. So, just over two short years after launch, the parent company decided to sell.

> "We feared we would lose our identity and disappear, subsumed by such a large organisation" SIMON GOODWIN ON BT



If you want big licences like Superman than you have to be prepared to accept games like *Romper Room.*

Gerry Murray immediately touted Beyond to British Telecom. From BT's perspective, buying Beyond appeared to be a good deal. The label had an excellent and innovative reputation in the industry, and it appeared to have good prospects for the future with some interesting home-grown titles in development and *Superman* (via First Star) on the horizon. With this portfolio in mind, BT's Ederyn Williams proposed the purchase to the BT hierarchy, and they agreed.

As soon as Bill Delaney was informed of EMAP's decision he told his staff, but by then the sale to BT was all but signed. "We weren't happy about it" recalls Simon Goodwin. "We all got on extremely well and really enjoyed the company and the business. We feared we would lose our identity and disappear, subsumed by such a large organisation as BT".

Beyond was duly purchased by BT from EMAP for a very significant six-figure sum in late 1985. In early '86 the business moved to BT's offices in Upper St Martin's Lane, less than two miles away from the EMAP offices in Farringdon. A new era was about to start.

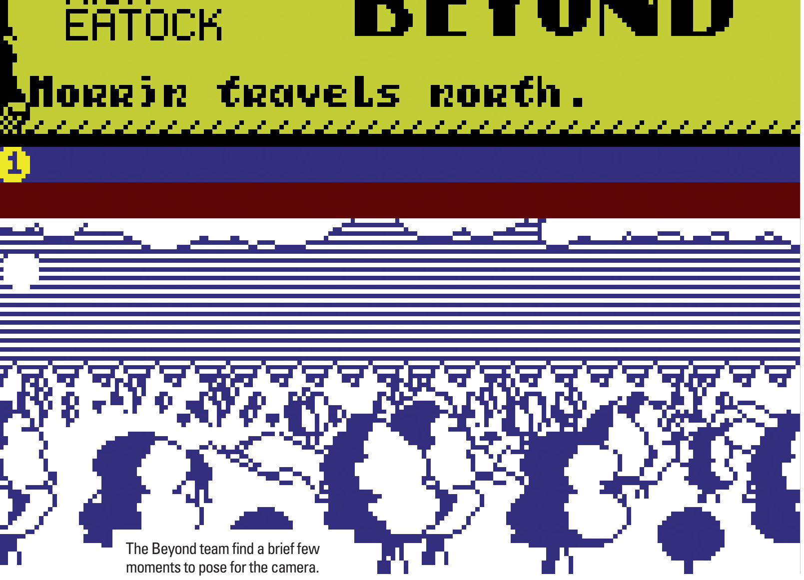
British Telecom

The earliest casualties of the BT take-over were Bill Delaney and Clive Bailey, who steered the company through the purchase but who then left to set up a new publishing label of their own called Nexus.

However, there were already rumblings from within Telecomsoft. First Star's *Superman* game, which was believed to have been a major factor in the decision by BT to buy the company, was becoming a problem.

TIMELINE

- 1983 – BEYOND SET UP BY TERRY PRATT AND MARCUS RICH
- 1983 – MARCUS RICH RETURNS TO EMAP AND BILL DELANEY JOINS
- 1983 – TERRY PRATT CONTACTS DEVELOPERS TO SOURCE GAMES FOR BEYOND IN UK AND USA
- 1983 – SPELLBOUND, SS ACHILLES, SPACE STATION ZEBRA, GOODNESS GRACIOUS, KRIEGSPIEL, UP PERISCOPE RELEASED
- 1983 – SIMON GOODWIN, MARY LINEHAN, CLIVE BAILEY RECRUITED
- 1984 – JANE SHILLINGTON, PETE MORELAND AND FRANCIS LEE JOIN BEYOND
- 1984 – LORDS OF MIDNIGHT, PSYTRON, SPY VS SPY, ANKH, AZTEC, MY CHESS II, PSI-WARRIOR RELEASED
- 1984 – TERRY PRATT RETURNS TO EMAP MAGAZINES. BILL DELANEY PROMOTED
- 1985 – DOOMDARK'S REVENGE, SHADOWFIRE, SPY VS SPY II, SORDERON'S SHADOW, ENIGMA FORCE RELEASED
- 1985 – MONOLITH LAUNCHED. ROCKFORD'S RIOT, BOUNCES, QUAKE MINUS ONE RELEASED.
- 1985 – EMAP SELLS BEYOND TO TELECOMSOFT (BT)
- 1985 – SUPERMAN: THE GAME RELEASED FOR C64
- 1986 – BILL DELANEY AND CLIVE BAILEY LEAVE TO SET UP NEXUS
- 1986 – BEYOND RELOCATES TO BT OFFICES IN LONDON
- 1986 – DOOMDARK'S REVENGE NOVELLA RECORDED AS AUDIO PLAY
- 1986 – ROMPER ROOM IS THE LAST BEYOND GAME RELEASED IN THE CLASSIC YELLOW PACKAGING
- 1986 – INFODROID, DANTE'S INFERNO, DOOMDARK'S REVENGE (CONVERSIONS), ENIGMA FORCE (CPC), THE BEST OF BEYOND RELEASED
- 1986 – DEVELOPMENT ON STAR TREK: REBEL UNIVERSE AND DARK SCEPTRE BEGINS



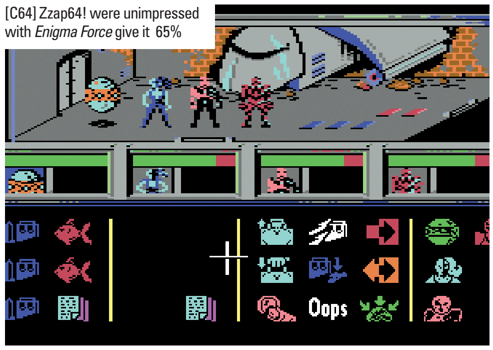




Francis Lee takes a deserved fag break. He's now runs Beyond Twilight.



The Beyond team find a brief few moments to pose for the camera.



[C64] Zzap64! were unimpressed with *Enigma Force* give it 65%

"The Superman game turned out to be a real disaster," says Ederyn Williams, who with hindsight now regrets the purchase of Beyond by BT. The Commodore 64 original was published via the Beyond label using the familiar Beyond packaging, but it was critically slammed and with good reason. It was a very poor use of a licence and nobody had a good word to say about it.

Beyond really needed a new captain to steer the ship through this troubled time, and it came in the familiar form of sales manager, Francis Lee.

Star Trek

Francis grabbed the opportunity to run Beyond with both hands, and was keen to get the firm back on track, as he explains.

"Given that Beyond was not performing as well as it had previously, it was felt that something special was needed to lift the label back to its place at the top. With that in mind, we assembled a team of the best programming and design minds who had worked previously with Beyond and put them all to work under the leadership of Mike Singleton, who was keen to design a *Star Trek* game."

Two ex-members of Denton Designs (Graham Everitt and Steve Cain) had just turned freelance and were lured by Peter Moreland and Herbie Wright (from Firebird) into working on Beyond's *Star Trek* game.

Around this time, Francis Lee recruited a new marketing manager in the form of Marc Peirson, whom Francis had known for a few years before and during his time at EMAP. Marc got to masquerade as Captain James T Kirk for three days on the Beyond stand at the 1986 Personal Computer World Show. The stand itself was dressed up as the USS Enterprise bridge. Unfortunately, the game was destined to be published for the Atari ST over a year later than planned, and it wasn't quite the mega-game everyone had hoped for. The conversions to the Commodore 64 and the IBM PC also took a further two years to appear.

A Play On Words

Another decision that Francis Lee took whilst in charge of Beyond was to generate fresh interest in the soon-to-be-released Commodore 64 and Amstrad CPC conversions of *Doomdark's Revenge*.

"I came up with the idea of taking the novella that came with the original Spectrum version and converting it into a dramatic radio play which would be produced as an audio cassette and given away free with the conversions."

Marc Peirson has reason to remember this part of Beyond's history, as he provided the narrator's voice.

"The reason I speak in such a silly fast voice as narrator is because I originally did it in a 'by the fireside' comfortable, slow voice and the recording engineer reckoned we didn't have enough tape on the cassettes to talk at that speed, so I had to speed it up by speaking quicker!"

As Beyond was now part of BT, the decision was also taken to make the play available via a premium-rate phone number. The audio was sliced up into different chapters, and each chapter could be listened to by dialling a particular number. The play was later included in a compilation called *The Best Of Beyond*.

All Good Things

Unfortunately, it didn't take long before more of the original Beyond staff decided to leave. Francis Lee recalls the hard decisions that people had to make.

"Despite the continued innovative ideas that we strove to bring to the label during our time at BT, it was clear that there were fundamental differences in how BT now expected us to work. This unfortunately eventually led to most of us leaving a wonderful label that we had built up and had so much fun with," laments Francis.

"It was an era of great change in the industry," remembers Marc Peirson, "with the smaller cottage industry type software companies being snapped up by the bigger corporations. "The arty or indie nature of the industry was changing into a far more mainstream type of business, so it was time for some of us to move on."

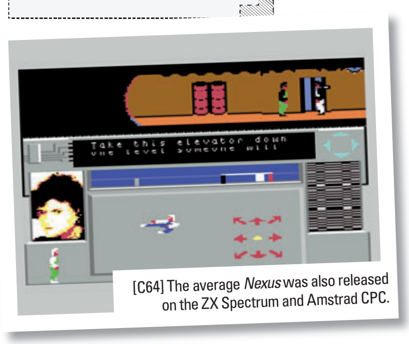
In the end, only Pete Moreland remained with BT. Once the games in development had been published – *Star Trek* and Mike Singleton's *Dark Sceptre* were moved to BT's Firebird label – the Beyond brand was quietly laid to rest. Sadly, Beyond was no more.

☐ NEXUS

The Nexus publishing label was set up by Paul Voysey and Tayo Olowu (programmers of *Psytron* and *Psi-Warrior*), with Bill Delaney and Clive Bailey joining after Beyond had been sold to BT.

The label published a handful of C64 titles, including the eponymous *Nexus* game itself, which was originally going to be published by Beyond. The game was packaged in a chunky plastic box, which just went to show that Bill Delaney might have been a little obsessed with unusual box packaging after the failure of Monolith. It would have also cost much more to manufacture than the more standard cardboard box, thus forcing them to charge more for the game.

Other games published by Nexus included *Warrior II* (which was a sequel to *Psi-Warrior* and looked quite similar), *Assault Machine*, *Blazer* and *Hades Nebula*. Nexus stuck with the chunky boxes for a while, before reverting to the more sensible plastic cases. The label then disappeared in 1987, with most of its titles being re-published on various budget labels a year or so later.



[C64] The average *Nexus* was also released on the ZX Spectrum and Amstrad CPC.

1986 – PCW SHOW – USS ENTERPRISE NC1701 STAND TO PROMOTE STAR TREK

1986 – ALL BUT ONE OF THE BEYOND STAFF LEAVE TELECOMSOFT

1987 – STAR TREK AND DARK SCEPTRE PUBLISHED ON FIREBIRD LABEL INSTEAD OF BEYOND

1987 – TELECOMSOFT DISCONTINUES BEYOND LABE

THE MAKING OF...



He's cute, fluffy and likely to drive everyone QWAKers. Kim Wild chats with Jamie Woodhouse about the origins of his platform creation that has thrived for the past 20 years

IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** TEAM 17
- » **DEVELOPER:** JAMIE WOODHOUSE
- » **RELEASED:** 1989 (BBC MICRO), 1993 (AMIGA), 2006 (GBA), 2009 (PC)
- » **PLATFORMS:** BBC MICRO, AMIGA, AMIGA CD32, GBA, PC
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORMER
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £10+

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

NITRO
SYSTEM: ATARI ST/AMIGA
YEAR: 1990

ALL TERRAIN RACING
SYSTEM: AMIGA
YEAR: 1995

LUNAR LANDER (COMPILATION)
SYSTEM: GBA
YEAR: 2005

There have been many platform game stars over the years, yet few have had staying power and only a handful are still prominent today. Mario and Sonic are the most obvious examples, but one other character that has been steadily collecting gems for the last 20 years and continues to do so is QWAK, a simple yet adorable duck. Had it not been for a school friend, however, the path to QWAK's creation would never have existed.

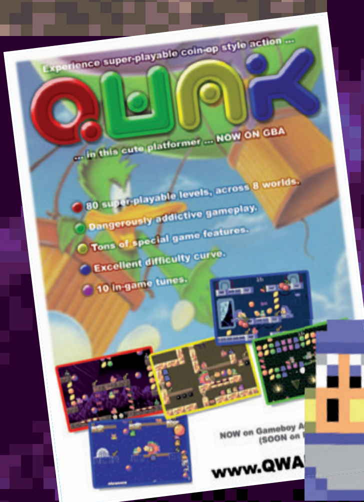
"A friend of mine at school persuaded me to come to computer club, one dinner time. I seem to remember I was more inclined to kick a ball around the school yard at that time, so he must have been quite persuasive," explains Jamie Woodhouse, programmer and inventor of QWAK. "After school, I did a two-year computer studies course at college – which I failed, miserably. I used to go down the arcade and play games all day. I guess, around that time, I was already coding in assembler on the BBC, and couldn't grasp the relevance of archaic programming languages such as Cobol and Pascal (which was a large part of my course). I was developing *QWAK* for the BBC off my own bat and, before it was finished, was commissioned to develop a budget title for BBC and Electron called *Dead Or Alive* (it was a bit crap). After that, I completed *QWAK* and sold it to Superior Software."

QWAK ("definitely nothing to do with the noise that ducks make") was released on a compilation tape in 1988 called *Play It Again Sam 10*, followed by *Zalaga*, *3D Dotty* and *Repton* within 8-10 months. His work on the BBC Micro provided valuable experience. "It was a good machine to learn programming on. It had a built-in assembler, which could be integrated with chunks of Basic. No hardware support for things like sprites and scrolling, all of which had to be done in software, but direct manipulation of video RAM."

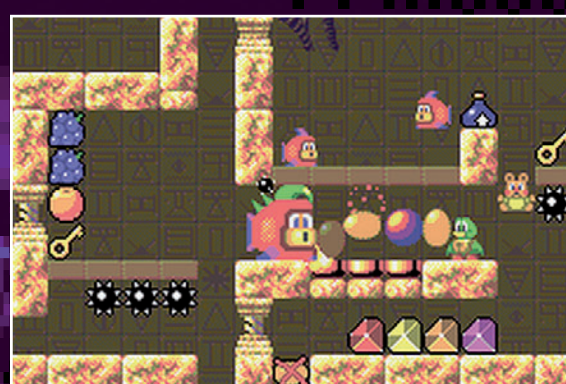
It would be some years later before Woodhouse would return to *QWAK*, this time with a remake for the Amiga that was eventually released in 1993. Many gamers will realise that the Amiga release bears little resemblance to the BBC Micro version, focusing more on collectables and bonuses. "I'd say it's a completely different game," confesses Jamie. "The only shared bits are the name, it's a platform game, and you're a duck. Oh, and the peace bonus and riding up the screen on bubbles."

Yet it is the Amiga game that many will think of regarding *QWAK*: an excellent platform game that's easy to play but difficult to master. In many ways, the game can be compared to *Bubble Bobble*, with each level taking place on one screen, the ability to throw eggs instead of bubbles as a weapon, and the restriction of a time limit if a level takes too long to complete. What makes *QWAK* different is that keys have to be collected in order to unlock the exit and the game can be played in a variety of different ways. Do you focus solely on just completing the levels or go for high score tactics, collecting all the fruit and power-ups available with a peace bonus increasing your score if you don't kill a single enemy? Its fast pace means that sharp, speedy reflexes are vital to get through the levels. The comparison is not lost on Jamie.

» A promotional poster of the GBA release



» [GBA] There's nothing quite like pelting eggs at others to start the day.



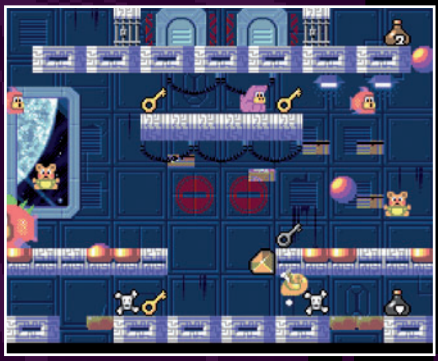
THE MAKING OF... QWAK



» [PC] The PC version contains a useful tutorial for newcomers to the series.



» [BBC Micro] While limited in scope, this version was incredibly colourful.



» [Amiga] Touch a skull and your duck is ready for the oven. Crispy.

NO FOWL PLAY

FISH
Move across the screen horizontally

LARGER ENEMIES
Act in the same way, but take longer to kill

SPIDERS
Travel up and down the screen

HAPPY GHOST
Invincible, can travel anywhere and kills on contact

BUNNIES
These guys bounce around all angles erratically

SKULLS
Touch these and instant death will occur

DOLPHINS
Have general freedom of movement across the levels

SPIKES
These bad boys fall from the top of the screen

"I had played that in the arcade, but can't recall if that was before or after developing *QWAK*. I know I played a lot of other platform games, both in the arcade and on home computers, which I'm sure helped to shape *QWAK*. Of course, there's an element of my own personality in the game too."

Surprisingly, publishers showed little interest. "I had developed (maybe 70% completion) *QWAK* for the Amiga and was touting it around at a trade show, ECTS I think. Team17 were the last company I saw, and I was quite surprised to find they showed an interest in the game; everyone else said the presentation was good, but had no interest in it. Team17 were ace to work with. There was a lot of enthusiasm about the game from everyone there and quite a few people contributed ideas, or said this is cool, or that could be better. I really enjoyed that team spirit. I'm not so sure you find that so much these days. The old cynic that I am!"

Upon why *QWAK* is so highly regarded, Jamie is quite philosophical. "I have no idea. I just try to do things as best as I can, oh, and to follow my heart, and where possible do what I love. I think, maybe it's a good idea to temper this with large doses of common sense and planning things out (which I'm not very good at). As far as the game goes, I think there's a big multi-layered thing going on (always different challenges for different skill levels of player). Also, tons of variety; for example, the same level can be played either as it is, or with a variety of randomly chosen features. Don't you think, though, that as with a lot of things in life, most fun things have a way or transcending reason or explanation, or any attempt to pick them apart and understand them?"

For some years, Jamie Woodhouse would remain within the industry, working on an assortment of Game Boy Advance compilations with versions of *Lander*, *Battleships*, *Simon* and *Scrabble Junior* among others. It's a console that he found a pleasure to work on. "The GBA is a fantastic device to make games for, it's just a shame there's next to no chance of developing anything new and original for it, or getting to exercise your creativity to a satisfying degree. I don't think there is much heart or soul in the games business these days; maybe I have it all wrong, I don't know, it's just how it seems to me." Not one to shy away from his creation for long, Jamie launched a website (www.qwak.co.uk) and began work on a conversion for the GBA. Rather than go through the costly and more taxing traditional method of releasing through a publisher, Jamie decided to sell his new game directly, with consumers able to purchase the product on a real cartridge. This method of self-publishing proved to be as time consuming as the development of the game itself, with the whole process taking around five months. "There was website design, and ordering carts from China and duplication,

> "I feel the PC gameplay is spot on, faithful to the Amiga, yet with lots of new elements"

order tracking, filling envelopes and sending out orders etc. I was like a mini-publisher I guess; it's a whole different kettle of fish to development. Feedback on the game has been very good, though, and [it has] brought a lot of joy to older gamers that've played the Amiga version, and newer gamers too."

Those who have ever played the GBA release will testify that it's a polished product that retains the playability of the Amiga version and remains as enjoyable as ever. Despite being cut down visually, it's still adorable to behold and with three difficulty levels it caters for all gamers – although don't underestimate the trickiness of Normal mode! Its one omission is the two-player mode, something that is understandable considering the constraints of the technology. "I know what a pain it is to develop multiplayer games on GBA. I've had bitter experience there in the past, didn't like the idea of subjecting myself to additional pain," explains Jamie. "I also had to make the game scroll a little bit. The original has a screen size of 320x200, while the GBA is limited to 240x160, so hence, it scrolls. This doesn't adversely affect gameplay, though."

More recently, *QWAK* has received an overhaul for the PC, also downloadable from Jamie Woodhouse's website upon purchase. We've been playing the PC version extensively and can confirm that it is truly the definitive version of *QWAK*, not only for having glorious 2D visuals but reinstating the two-player mode, including online high score leaderboards and even more power-ups. Its two-year development has been worthwhile and with 80 levels to complete, it'll keep players busy. "[The development took] quite a long time, due in part to the fact that I did all the coding, design and graphics, everything myself," remarks Jamie. "It felt like such a battle at times, and then I'll have moments where I'm thinking, God this looks crap, and I'm sure I'll only sell three copies, to family members, who are only buying it because they love me. Was a bit of a slog but I'm very happy with the results. I personally feel the gameplay is spot on, faithful to the Amiga version, yet also introducing lots of new elements. Response has been fantastic and most people who've played it say very good things about it. It does, however, have a reputation for not being an easy game (but apparently, that just gives it more 'one more go' appeal)."

Best of all, Jamie Woodhouse has kindly offered a discount on the PC download especially for Retro Gamer readers. "There's a FREE download available on the Qwak website: www.qwak.co.uk. It's only 4.5MB, so that's a very good download-size to gameplay ratio and there's no excuse for not giving it a go. Finally, just for Retro Gamer readers, type in the URL: http://www.qwak.co.uk/pages/buy/secret.php and enter 'retrogamer' into the box provided for a £5 discount."

20 years on, and *QWAK* doesn't show any sign of slowing down, with even more plans in store for the future. A Mac port is currently in the works, while a level editor for the PC game is receiving some finishing touches. "The development work on the level editor and the 'create and share your own level packs' is complete, and is now in the test phase; and when I'm happy with the process, and the test users can easily make and share their own level packs, it will be available in the full game (and also as a free upgrade for existing users)."

Naturally, we had to ask Jamie the most important question of them all regarding *QWAK*: which is better, the purple or the green duck? "Yeah, I take these things VERY seriously; it's the one with the red feet…" Here's to another 20 years of quacking fun.

EGGSCELLENT QUALITY

QWAK has always been well received by the specialist press, with the BBC Micro version receiving praise from *Electron User* as "an entertaining and addictive, if old-fashioned, levels game." Jamie Woodhouse remembers the reviews: "One review said it was easily the pick of the bunch. Not that I want to get catty you understand. Mwahaha." The Amiga game garnered high scores across the board, with magazines awarding the game marks in the high eighties/nineties including *Amiga Power*, *The One* and *Amiga Computing*. Jamie is understandably proud of *QWAK*'s reputation. "It was very gratifying and I felt great going into the newsagents and finding a fresh review of *QWAK*. It was given 92% by one magazine, with a double-page review, was great to see." Even now, the Game Boy Advance release has received its fair share of praise, with our sister magazine *GamesTM* giving the game 89%.


QWAK

A HOMEBREW HATCHLING

Rescued from the obscure depths of Amiga non-fame, Jamie Woodhouse has resurrected his under-appreciated platform game for another chance to make it big. Although it was criminally ignored during its 1993 budget release, **games™** has taken the opportunity to champion this excellent platform game whenever possible (see issues 48, 51 and 53). As stated on each of these occasions, the cutesy platformer plays similarly to many Taito classics like *Bubble Bobble*. The aim is to guide a little green duck around the stage, collecting those old videogame staples of fruit and gems before waddling to the exit without being hit by an enemy. It's a simple concept but one that's pulled off with the sort of immediacy and addictiveness that makes retro games so fun and compelling.

The GBA port, which is strictly limited to just 300 copies is almost identical to the Amiga version, except

Format: Game Boy Advance
Publisher: www.qwak.co.uk
Developer: Jamie Woodhouse
Price: £15

with the added bonus that jump is now mapped to the B-button rather than annoyingly having to press up on the D-pad. The original's excellent two-player mode is missing, but this is still the same quality single-player experience that it was 14 years ago. Making it that little bit more attractive to collectors is the production

Most hom

games are

but Woodhouse ha

the time to produc

translucent green cartridg

with a printed instructio

and the opportunity to do

a printable GBA box or

insert. It's a small touch but o

appreciated and sure to r

collectability of this limited

in years to come. eBay

aside, Qwak is well worth

asking price. With new GBA

becoming thin on the grou

retro releases only trickling

on DS, this should be consi

essential purchase for any r

with either handheld.

Thanks to Jamie Woodhouse for supplying certain screenshots.





THE COMPLETE HISTORY OF SHINOBI

Messed with, altered, tweaked and almost landing Sega in hot water… join Stuart Hunt as he tries to clear up the muddled history of the most popular videogame ninja series of all time, while fighting a submarine

While Sega and Namco's arcade rivalry was most prevalent during the polygon 3D age of arcade games, both companies went head to head in the mid-Eighties by releasing two very similar run-and-gun games into arcades. In 1986 Namco rolled out *Rolling Thunder*, an *anime* spy take on the genre that found a spy taking on a terrorist organisation to save a kidnapped female agent; just a year later, Sega released a ninja take on the genre.

When *Shinobi* smashed its way onto arcade monitors in 1987, it was an instant hit with arcade goers. Sega had sought to capitalise on the growing popularity of martial arts, kung-fu cinema and arcade games with a new ninja-themed run-and-gun arcade game running from its Sega System 16 arcade board. The thinking was commercially sound, given the 'ninja craze' that was happening in the West at the time; and as Sega had hoped, people flocked to their local arcades to sample the delights of the company's latest arcade offering.

Shinobi was the brainchild of Sega's Noriyoshi Ohba, who joined the company as a planner in 1987 and quickly become a bigwig within its consumer R&D department. Ohba's CV makes for an impressive read, for as well as bringing us the delights of *Shinobi*, he is also credited for work on *Wonder Boy In Monster Land*, *Panzer Dragoon*, *Clockwork Knight* and even having a hand in the development of *Streets Of Rage*.

Despite its clear ninja theme, much of *Shinobi* is westernised, which has always been a trait of Sega. *Shinobi*'s main protagonist, Joe Musashi – clearly a name that melds together East and West names – looks of American descent, and the various levels in the game feature many American pop culture influences. The first stage, for instance, is set in a city that resembles New York, is adorned with Marilyn Monroe posters, the red and blue enemies scaling the city walls share a passing resemblance to a popular Marvel Comics web-slinger, while the first boss, Ken-Oh, clearly shops at the same samurai boutique as Shredder from the *Ninja Turtles* cartoons.

For a ninja game, though, *Shinobi* surprises by featuring no stealth element, and very little in the way of armed combat. Joe isn't your typical ninja, choosing to strut unmasked through the game's five stages and taking on all-comers rather than creeping in between the shadows. Joe's signature form of attack is traditionally his unlimited stock of throwing stars, along with ninja spells that he can summon to rid the screen of enemies should things get a little too hairy. In the first *Shinobi*, Joe has three ninjitsu spells at his disposal: a lightning spell, tornado spell and one which causes him to explode into a flurry of many Joes that zip around attacking everything they come in contact with. Both Joe's close- and long-range attacks can be upgraded during the course of the game; his punch can be traded for a katana sword, and his throwing stars for a gun that looks and fires like a rocket launcher – the latter armament clearly demonstrating even more western influences seeping into the game and its hero.

Despite the obvious difference in their settings, the gameplay, structure and overall feel of *Rolling Thunder* and *Shinobi* are remarkably similar. Both games meld East and West cultural influences and both utilise a game mechanic whereby the player can continually flit between two sections of the level – low and high ground, and often between foreground and background, in the case of *Shinobi*. However, there are notable differences between the two games. For one, rather than asking players to run and gun to the end of each level, *Shinobi* adds a 'rescue the hostage' dynamic to its gameplay, which locks progression to the next stage unless all the hostages on each level are freed. *Shinobi* is also famed for being incredibly unforgiving, more so than *Rolling Thunder*, adding boss fights to the mix and one hit (but not collision with the enemy) signalling death for Joe. To make matters worse, restart points are positioned at the very start of levels, and should the player fail to finish the final stage in a single credit, the game is over. However, one of beauties of *Shinobi* lies in the fact that the game can quite easily mastered by learning the attack patterns and the timing

THE COMPLETE HISTORY OF SHINOBI



UNLICENSED TO KILL

One of the most iconic elements of Shinobi is the epic and farcical boss fights. We look back at some of the most bizarre, and often unlicensed, end-of-level guardians that Joe has battled

KEN OH

This giant samurai warrior looks like Shredder from *TMNT*. He crops up at the end of the first two stages to lob a cheeky fireball at Joe and bugger off. Because of the sporadic nature of his fireball attack, he can be tricky customer to kill. The trick is to get in quick with some ninja magic and go for the weak spot that's found on his helmet (ooh, er).



THE BLACK TURTLE

Surprisingly enough, The Black Turtle isn't actually a turtle, but is in fact a greenish-coloured helicopter that out spits an army of yellow ninjas to attack Joe. This is the first time in the *Shinobi* series we see Joe pitting his ninja skills against a mode of transportation – something which would later become a bizarre mainstay for the series.



FREIGHT TRAIN

While Hayate, not Joe, fought this boss, the freight train fight in the second stage of *Shadow Dancer* has gone down in *Shinobi* lore as one of the most memorable boss battles in the series, which is why we include it here. It's a typical 'man armed with throwing stars vs train' type battle, and there's no prize for guessing who walks away from the fight.



THE TERMINATOR

The scrap yard stage in *The Revenge Of Shinobi* finds our Joe coming face to face with the first licence-infringing boss in the game: a muscle-bound, sunglasses-wearing body builder who resembles a certain Californian governor, and whose skin erodes during the fight to reveal a T800-style robotic exoskeleton underneath. Shamelessly awesome.



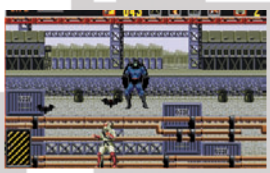
SPIDER MAN

The Revenge Of Shinobi's most memorable boss encounter finds Joe facing off against two iconic comic-book heroes. The first is Marvel's Spider-Man, who zips down from the ceiling. He featured in all versions of the game because Sega negotiated the rights with Marvel during development of *Amazing Spider-Man Vs The Kingpin* on the Mega Drive.



BATMAN

With Spider-Man left licking his wounds, DC's Batman drops in to finish the fight. Though lacking the chest motif and donning actual bat wings, it's clear that Gotham's Dark Knight was the inspiration here – well, DC Comics certainly thought so. In later versions of the game, Sega was asked to drop the Batman boss, so replaced him with a winged bat demon.



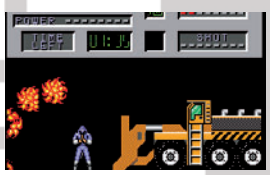
GODZILLA

The penultimate boss in *The Revenge Of Shinobi* is clearly based on Tokyo's largest import: Godzilla. He appeared in the first two iterations of the game. However, after Godzilla's creator Toho discovered this, Sega was ordered to remove the boss. It later got around the issue by gruesomely slicing the giant lizard in half to expose his internal organs.



BULLDOZER

From the first stage of *Cyber Shinobi*, this is the most ridiculous boss fight in the *Shinobi* series. As well as the bulldozer looking like it was designed by a child using different kinds of breakfast cereal, there's the laughable way it moves around the screen. Still, not many ninjas can say they're actually harder than a bulldozer.



SUBMARINE

The submarine boss in *Cyber Shinobi* takes the act of fighting modes of transport to brand-new head-slapping realms. At the close of the game's second stage, and given Sega's usual penchant for using unlicensed film characters without permission, Joe here has to avoid a missile-ing by U571 and reduce Harrison Ford to tears.





» [Arcade] The tin can alley, *Space Invaders*-style bonus rounds offered a much needed extra life if you could clear all the ninjas before they got you.

of the enemies. To this end, what initially seems an impenetrable nut to crack slowly melts in the mouth with continued play, and becomes an enjoyable score chaser.

Shinobi's story centres on the criminal organisation known as Zeed. The organisation's five leaders, known as the Ring of Five, have kidnapped the children of the world's leaders. Joe Musashi, a member of the Oboro clan of Shinobis, is tasked with saving the kids and stopping the five leaders – who each play an end-of-level boss in the game's five stages. Each member of The Ring of Five is imposing and unique and, as in *Altered Beast* (another Sega arcade game from the same era), will taunt the player by popping up at the end of the stages (some, such as Ken-Oh will even attack) and escape before the player can retaliate.

Given *Shinobi*'s popularity in the arcades, it was no surprise that the game was ported across to pretty much every computer and console of the day. An impressive conversion released in 1988 for Sega's Master System made the mission easier by adding a life bar, plus a whole host of new weapons, and dropping the hostage element. And a year later the game was ported to the NES, various 8-bit micros, the Atari ST, PC, Amiga and the PC Engine. The worst conversion is widely considered to be the NES port, which was developed by Tengen; and the best a pretty decent translation by Asmik released for the PC Engine, which is let down by the fact that it's missing the second stage of the arcade game, as well as the excellent bonus stage and lacks any of Joe's melee attacks.

1989 saw two new *Shinobi* games find a release – one in the arcades and another on Sega's then cutting-edge Mega Drive console. There is some confusion as to which game of three is the true sequel to the original. In any case, there can be no question that *Shadow Dancer* is the direct 'arcade' sequel to *Shinobi*, marking the end of a very short coin-op history for the series. As well as its wonderful spruced up visuals, courtesy of Sega's Sega System 18 arcade board, *Shadow Dancer* is noteworthy for three reasons. Firstly, Sega did a *Donkey Kong Jr* number on poor Joe and cast his son, Hayate, in the lead role. Secondly, the game featured a neat mechanic whereby the player could order an obedient dog, called Yamato, to rush at and stun enemies to make them easier to pick off. Finally, Sega made two very different versions of the game: the arcade, Sega Master System, Amiga, CPC and C64 version; and an isolated Mega Drive/Genesis version – more about this a little later. Despite the new aesthetics and the addition of having a canine cohort to lend a hand, the strategy/action gameplay of the original *Shinobi* remains pretty much undisturbed in the arcade version of *Shadow Dancer*, with most of the core gameplay elements carried over. The kid hostages from the first game are replaced with bombs, which must be defused before you can progress to the next stage, and the strategic dual-plane mechanic remains too. The game also keeps the original's penchant for epic boss fights, but this time Sega perhaps takes things a little too far when stage 2 of the game finds Hayate fighting a giant



MANY BOSSES WERE BASED ON POP CULTURE ICONS





» [Game Gear] The excellent *GG Shinobi* titles let you choose the order in which you tackle the first four levels – the only *Shinobi* titles that ever offered this option.

freight train. The arcade version of *Shadow Dancer* isn't as well received by some fans of the series. It's not that it's a bad game; it just wasn't as accomplished, ambitious or as enjoyable as the *Shinobi* games that followed – particularly the next game to find a release, which many fans consider to be the high point for the series.

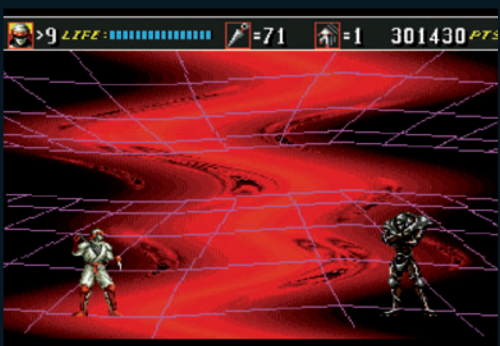
Released six months after the Mega Drive's launch in Japan, and sitting beside a lacklustre software line-up comprising *Super Thunder Blade*, *Space Harrier 2* and *Last Battle*, *The Revenge Of Shinobi* (by default, some would argue) marked the first true must-have title for Sega's 16-bit machine. *The Revenge Of Shinobi* [*TROS*] was, and still is, a technical and visual marvel for the Mega Drive. It's a timeless 16-bit classic that scraps some elements of the original arcade game and brilliantly ramps up others. Removed is the bomb-defusing/hostage-saving and dual-plane mechanic, and in their place stand far more intricate level design, more onus on exploration and a refined combat and a control system which allows Joe to shower his enemies with throwing stars and perform a double jump to get around more easily. Joe is also given a health bar, which is a good job as the game is incredibly challenging – the final stage consists of an agonising labyrinth of puzzle screens connected by doorways, proving a particular nasty and frustrating sticking point for even the most skilled gamers.

As well as donning Hayate's lustrous white and red suit for the first time, Joe has the ability to summon four spell attacks: Ikazuchi, Karyu, Fushin and Mijin – the art of thunder, fire, floating and spontaneous combustion, respectively. Moreover, this time the new spell attacks take a more strategic role in the gameplay. Karyu and Mijin, for instance, are offensive spells – although using Mijin costs you a life. Ikazuchi smothers Joe in lightning, and can be used defensively like a shield, while Fushin increases Joe's agility.

TROS's story follows on directly from the original arcade game. With the Ring of Five destroyed, the Zeed was thought to be over. However, newly reformed under the name Neo Zeed, they exact revenge on Joe by killing his Oboro clansmen and kidnapping his girlfriend, Naoko – and, hence the rather big clue in the game's title, Joe doesn't like that one little bit. This story is played out in the game's intro, mostly through text, and is the first and only time in a *Shinobi* game that we really get any insight into Joe's past. The kidnapping of Naoko is also notable, as her rescue comes into the play in the game's finale where Joe must defeat the final boss quickly before a lowering ceiling crushes Naoko. Accomplishing this feat is not easy, and rewards players with the true ending of the game. Fail to save poor Naoko and it's off to YouTube you trot.

Interestingly, there were actually several versions of *TROS* released by Sega, and all are identical except for one thing: bosses. Sensing that the game's guardians played a big part in *Shinobi*'s appeal, and further trying to inject some western influence into the game's otherwise heavy oriental theme, Sega decided to base many of the game's bosses on various western pop culture icons, many ripped directly from comic-book pages and cinema screens [see 'Unlicensed To Kill' boxout]. The first version of *TROS*, aptly coined version 1.00, is distinguishable by its lack of copyright notice on the start-up screen and features all of the original bosses that Sega had originally intended to include in the game. It was released in Japan and, for a short while, was available in the US too. However, due to copyright laws in the US, Sega was quickly forced to tweak the look of the bosses to avoid litigation. This actually took two attempts by Sega, and resulted in three different







THE COMPLETE HISTORY OF SHINOBI





» [Mega Drive] This version of *Shadow Dancer* differs quite a bit from the coin-op, but don't let that put you off. It's great.



» [Arcade] Shadow Dancer's bonus stage was pretty impressive with enemies dropping down at you from a tall building.



» [Mega Drive] Joe stuns his ninja pals by showing off some of his pole-dancing skills.

versions of *The Revenge Of Shinobi* for the Mega Drive/Genesis finding a commercial release in North America.

Judging by the next game's title, and considering it is canon, *The Cyber Shinobi – Shinobi Part 2*, must logically be the true sequel to the original game, even though it's set in future (which means by in-game chronology it can't be). Anyway, considering the impressive job Sega did at condensing *Shinobi* onto the 8-bit Master System, there was high expectation that this SMS-exclusive sequel would continue with the goods. But, as the old adage goes, Ikazuchi rarely strikes twice, and sadly this could be no truer for Joe's second SMS appearance.

Armed with that cool title, you'd be forgiven for expecting *The Cyber Shinobi* [*TCS*] to be an awesome mixture of *Shinobi* meets *RoboCop*. Sadly, what you actually get is a half-baked attempt by Sega to try to force-feed a *TROS*-style *Shinobi* game into the humble guts of the Master System, while Sega lazily throws in the odd grey-coloured robot enemy armed with a hand gun to justify the word 'Cyber' sitting in the game's title.

Now before we completely rip into the direness of *The Cyber Shinobi*, to Sega's credit, the game is actually nicely presented and there's plenty going on here in terms of power-ups (there are four types of ninja magic at your disposal) and weapons. And while the backgrounds look a little drab, overall the visuals and character sprites are colourful, chunky and nicely detailed. The game itself borrows much from *The Revenge Of Shinobi* gameplay by aiming for multi-scrolling, intricate level layouts, but sadly mars the ambition with some agonising traffic-light scrolling, where the levels scroll for a bit and stop to force you to clear the screen of threats before letting you continue.

THE MOST BIZARRE COLLECTION OF END BOSSES EVER SEEN

Playing the role of Joe Musashi's grandson (also called Joe) and fighting against the futuristic sounding Cyber Zeed, *TCS* found players fighting through cybernetic and human adversaries, and facing off against the most bizarre collection of end bosses ever seen in a *Shinobi* title. The first level finds Joe trying to destroy a bulldozer. And when you think boss fights couldn't get any more bizarre than helicopters, trains and bulldozers, at the end of the second stage Sega nonchalantly pushes out a submarine for Joe to fight while maintaining a straight face for the duration of the battle. *TCS* also marks the first time in the series where your Shinobi's main form of attack isn't shurikens. Instead, the player has to dispatch enemies using either a stubby sword attack with a reach of nothing, or a crouching shin kick which is so weak you'll likely die of boredom before the cyborg you're kicking the shins of blows up.

The fact that *The Cyber Shinobi* was only released in Europe enforces the thinking that it's a title that

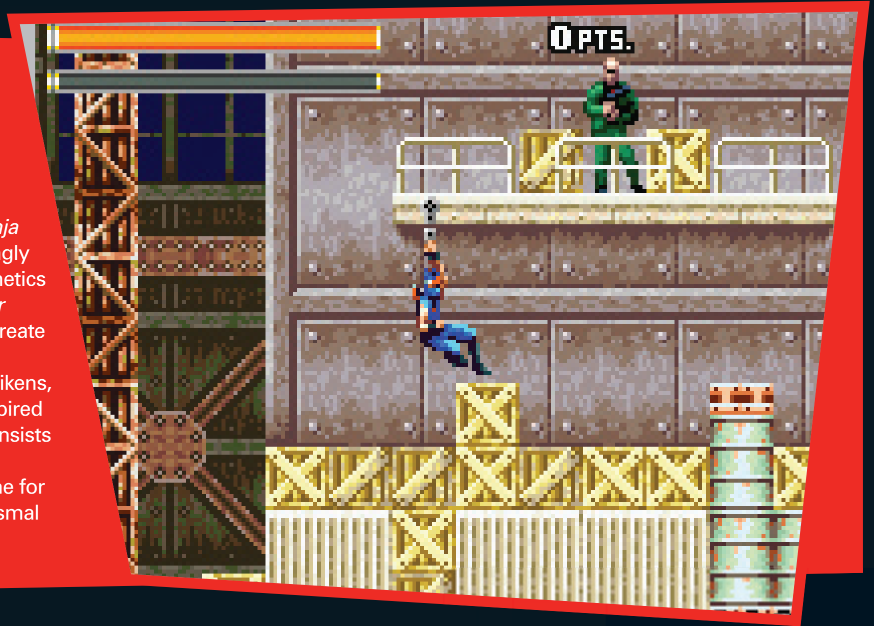
TIMELINE

- 1987 — SHINOBI | ARCADE | SEGA MASTER SYSTEM | NES | ZX SPECTRUM | COMMODORE 64 | PC | ATARI ST | COMMODORE AMIGA | DOS PC | PC ENGINE |
- 1988 — THE REVENGE OF SHINOBI | GENESIS |
- 1989 — SHADOW DANCER | ARCADE |
- 1990 — ALEX KIDD IN SHINOBI WORLD | SEGA MASTER SYSTEM |
- 1990 — THE CYBER SHINOBI | SEGA MASTER SYSTEM |
- 1991 — SHADOW DANCER | GENESIS | SEGA MASTER SYSTEM | PC | ATARI ST | COMMODORE 64 | SINCLAIR ZX SPECTRUM | COMMODORE AMIGA |
- 1991 — GAME GEAR SHINOBI | GAME GEAR |
- 1992 — GAME GEAR SHINOBI 2 | GAME GEAR |
- 1993 — SHINOBI III: RETURN OF THE NINJA MASTER | GENESIS |
- 1995 — SHINOBI X | SATURN |
- 2002 — SHINOBI | PLAYSTATION 2 |
- 2002 — THE REVENGE OF SHINOBI | GAME BOY ADVANCE |
- 2004 — NIGHTSHADE | PLAYSTATION 2 |



NINJA COP

While not strictly a *Shinobi* game, we felt we had to pay special tribute to this excellent Game Boy Advance title. Released in 2002, developed by Hudson and published by Konami, *Ninja Cop* (aka *Ninja Five-O*) is an underappreciated action title for the GBA that we strongly recommend any *Shinobi* fan to check out. With gameplay and aesthetics that borrow elements from *Shinobi*, *Bionic Commando* and *Elevator Action*, *Ninja Cop* mashes all these elements together brilliantly to create one of the best action games on Nintendo's handheld. With a main protagonist called Joe, who is armed to the nines with swords, shurikens, ninja magic and even a neat grappling hook, the game is clearly inspired by Sega's run-and-gun ninja classic – especially as the gameplay consists of freeing hostages and fighting some truly outlandish bosses. As a result, *Ninja Cop* works brilliantly as an enjoyable *Shinobi*-style game for Nintendo's handheld; one that certainly softens the blow of the abysmal *The Revenge Of Shinobi* on the GBA, that much is sure.



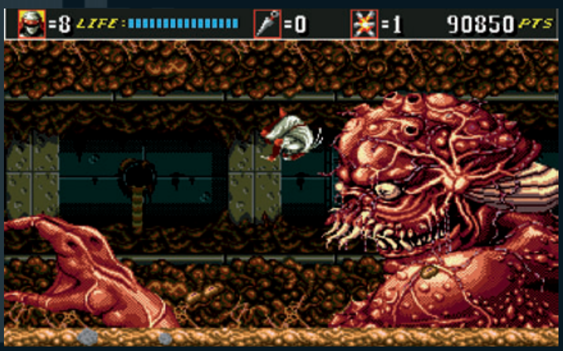
Sega itself didn't have very much confidence in – it clearly didn't think it was going to change the fate of the Master System in North America and Japan. With hindsight, though, *TCS* is certainly not the worst *Shinobi* game (that's coming up), but it certainly scrapes the bottom of the barrel in terms of quality.

Now 1991 is where things started to get a little silly for the *Shinobi* franchise. Released this year was the Mega Drive version of *Shadow Dancer*, which, as we mentioned earlier, is not strictly a conversion of the 1989 arcade game. Nope. It's actually one of those console re-imagining thingies, and a very good one at that. Weirdly, despite attempting (at least) to have a stab at porting the entire *Shadow Dancer* arcade game across to the Sega Master System, verbatim, Sega felt the need to rethink its approach for the game's Mega Drive conversion – which, strictly speaking, isn't actually a conversion at all. While the canine-ordering mechanic from the arcade is still present, the levels, visuals and gameplay are markedly different. Instead of defusing stolen bombs, in the Mega Drive version the player has to free hostages, the levels are different (although some do seem to be inspired by the coin-op), and ordering Yamato to bite the face off a man with arms like a praying mantis works a little differently as well (here it takes the form of a charge attack, and Yamato can't be hurt either). To further confuse people even more, for the western – but not Japanese – release of *Shadow Dancer*, Sega decided to ditch Hayate and replace him with his father. So, depending on which country you lived in it could either be Joe or Hayate left walking the dog.

The Game Gear had two *Shinobi* games released for it, and both are great. According to the front of the game's box, the official name for the first Game Gear game (1991) was actually just simply '*Shinobi*', which had many people obviously thinking it would be a straight conversion of the arcade original, which it isn't. However, soon after its release, it was renamed *The Game Gear Shinobi*, or the snappier *GG Shinobi*, to avoid confusion. In terms of the timeline, it's unclear as to where the Game Gear titles fit within the main canon. If their storylines are anything to go by, it seems that they're possibly either prequels to *Shinobi*, or set before *TROS*. Here, Joe, under the pseudonym 'the red ninja', is under orders by the master of the Oboro clan to investigate a mysterious evil that threatens their safety.

The gameplay of *GG Shinobi* is very much in keeping with *TROS*'s gameplay, but adds an extra element of strategy by having Joe rescue four of his Oboro clansmen at the end of each stage. Initially they take the form of the first four bosses in the game, but once beaten they become playable for the duration of the game. Each ninja (handily defined by dressing in a different primary colour) brings with them specific attributes that prove invaluable to finishing the game, adding a nice touch to the usual *Shinobi* gameplay. The *GG Shinobi* games also mark the first time in the series that the player can choose the order they attack the levels in. However, in both games the player must complete the first four stages to unlock the final level. Given the first Game Gear version's









THE COMPLETE HISTORY OF SHINOBI



ONE FIGHT FINDS JOE TAKING ON A HIDEOUS SLUDGE MONSTER



success, Sega quickly released a sequel the following year. *GG Shinobi II: The Silent Fury* is a game that many consider to be the best handheld iteration of the *Shinobi* saga. Not deviating too much from the gameplay of *GG Shinobi* (it has five stages and keeps the whole ninja-switching dynamic), this time more emphasis was given to using the various ninjas' attributes to progress through the game. Unlocking each ninja by finishing a stage, Joe and his pals must locate crystals hidden around the first four stages of the game. Finding them often requires the skills of a particular ninja, so the game requires you to replay through the levels with certain ninjas to glean the artefacts in order to finish the game.

The next game not only marks the final *Shinobi* title released for the Mega Drive, but also the last time that Joe Musashi would play the leading man in the series. Perhaps sensing this game would represent a great deal of finales for the series, and would mark an end of an era for the franchise, Sega would pull out all of the stops for this, the series' 16-bit swan song: *Shinobi III – Return of the Ninja Master* (aka *Super Shinobi II*).

With a redrawn and more agile Joe Musashi – he now has a dash attack, flying kick and can bounce off walls to gain access to higher platforms – the game looks stunning. While many fans argued that the action in previous *Shinobi* games felt a little subdued, Sega appeared to want to rectify this in *Shinobi III* by ramping up the action and forcing Joe to use all of his moves to get around the game – a mechanic that echoes the Game Gear series. *Shinobi III* also features the most spectacular bosses in any *Shinobi* game. One fight that stands out in particular finds Joe taking on a hideous sludge creature festering inside a sewer, while another sees Joe in an epic four-tier battle with a robot that can transformed into several different forms, *Seven Force* style. *Shinobi III* showcases some of the best-looking visuals on the Mega Drive and boasts some of the most fluid action seen in a *Shinobi* game, which is why it is widely considered to be the best game in the entire series.

In 1995, a new Sega machine and a new *Shinobi* marked a dramatic visual shift the series. *Shinobi X* (aka *Shinobi Legions*) – released for the Saturn, and produced by publisher Vic Tokai – is often criticised by fans for its cheesy *Monkey* TV show-style digitised graphics and hilarious FMV cut-scenes. However, if you scratch beneath all that kitsch you do find a curious and enjoyable enough *Shinobi* title that messes with some of the time-honoured traditions of the series. The game introduced a new protagonist, Sho, who had no blood ties with the Musashi lineage – a first for the series. Also, Sho is clearly trained in the school of *Cyber Shinobi* combat, with his main form of attack being his katana sword. And, like in *TCS*, Sho is forced to collect his ninjitsu spells during the game, like power-ups, rather than starting out with them from the outset. *Shinobi X* is also the first *Shinobi* game to feature blood and guts, and the first to include cut-scenes interlacing the gameplay to propel the narrative.

After the release of *Shinobi X*, it would be seven years before *Shinobi* would return to our screens again, and its appearance would be on another new machine and take the series in another bold new direction. *Shinobi*, released for the PS2, is the third game to be called '*Shinobi*', but the first to be in 3D. This offered yet another new Shinobi to control, in the shape of the mysterious red-scarf-wearing Hotsuma. 3D visuals aside, the game actually has very little in common with the preceding games in the series. Perhaps, the most notable carry-over is the fact that it's incredibly challenging. This is due to some devilishly tricky platform sections and an odd *Crank* movie-

NINJA SCROLL

With its confusing timeline, we thought we'd try to help out by piecing together the story of the Musashi family

SHINOBI
When the kids of the world's leaders are kidnapped by a criminal organisation known as Zeed, it falls to one lone Orobo ninja, Joe Musashi, to save them, defeat the Zeed's five leaders and put an end to the their criminal empire.

SHADOW DANCER (ARC)
Joe's son, Hayate takes the lead in the coin-op. With the help of his obedient mutt Yamato, he is tasked with trying to recover the weapons from the Olympia shuttle mission that were stolen by a new criminal threat known as Asian Dawn.

SHADOW DANCER (MD)
In the Japanese version, Hayate seeks vengeance for Joe's friend and ex-student Dick C Kato's murder by the Union Lizard gang; in the English version, Hayate is replaced with his father Joe. Each hero is accompanied by Dick's dog, Yamato.

CYBER SHINOBI
Cyber Zeed steal plutonium from power stations in a bid to hold the world to ransom with nuclear weapons. After several failed attempts to stop them, the Government enlists the help of Joe Musashi's grandson (also called Joe, confusingly).

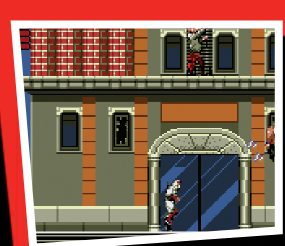
GG SHINOBI
When a new evil threatens the future of the Oboro clan, they react by sending in their four best ninjas to investigate the source of the terror. After all contact is lost with the four ninjas, Joe Musashi is brought in to investigate and save the Oboro.



















» [Arcade] The Black Turtle boss marked the first time in the series Joe has to fight a piece of transport, but it wouldn't be the last.







» [Sega Master System] Two of Sega's biggest IPs of the '80s found themselves getting an excellent videogame mash-up in 1990, courtesy of *Alex Kidd In Shinobi World*.

style plot gimmick that Sega fused into the game. To explain, Hotsuma's sword is cursed and slowly eats away at his life bar all the time he's not using it to slice and dice up his foes. But, on the plus side, chaining kills increases the sword's power, so it's not all bad news. It's a novel mechanic that lights a fire underneath the pace of the gameplay. While there's a new hero in the driving seat, in a clever bid to entice fans to see the game through to its completion, finishing it while obtaining all of the gold coins that are hidden throughout the six stages will unlock Joe Musashi to replay the game with, marking the final appearance of Musashi in a *Shinobi* game.

Sadly, coming to muddy an otherwise impeccable handheld history for *Shinobi* is *The Revenge Of Shinobi* for the Game Boy Advance (2002). Not be confused with the classic Mega Drive game it shares its title with, this portable oddity is a bright, chirpy and colourful-looking *Shinobi* game that has very little in the way of actual ninja action in it. The controls are sluggish, the gameplay has more emphasis on key collecting and chatting with people, and there's no Joe either – the character you play is actually called Shinobi – which, as any *Shinobi* fan will tell you, is about as *Shinobi* as a game where Joe Musashi has to win the affections of the Golden Girls through a series of bridge, bingo and lawn bowls-based mini-games. The game was developed by 3d6 Games, who also released the equally trashy *Altered Beast: Guardian Of The Realms* on the handheld the same year. If you really want a great *Shinobi*-like title for your GBA, check out *Ninja Cop* instead (see boxout).

In 2004 Sega released the final game in the *Shinobi* series: a follow-up to *Shinobi* PS2. Titled *Nightshade*, the game is notable for putting a female Shinobi, called Hibana, in the role of protagonist for the first time in the series and tipping the scales of virtual sexual equality by half an inch. Sega also set about refining the play, addressing many of the criticisms that fans bemoaned about the first PS2 edition; the game was made slightly easier (though not by much), the continually depleting health bar was dropped, and the controls, visuals and combat were refined too.

To date, there have been 12 games in the *Shinobi* series. Every one has tweaked, altered and messed with the franchise in varying ways. The series has always offered a high level of quality run-and-gun action, and comprises some of the best ninja games ever made. While the future of Sega's ninja series remains unclear, given the resurgence of ninja games of late – with titles like *Ninja Gaiden* and *Ninja Blade* and even *The Revenge Of Shinobi* finding a release on Virtual Console in Japan – plus Sega's current trend of looking to past franchises for an update (*Golden Axe, OutRun, Thunderforce*), there's a strong possibility that we've haven't yet seen the last of *Shinobi*. But then hasn't that always been the series' nature, coming at you when you least expect it?

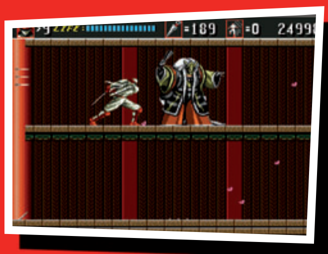
THE REVENGE OF SHINOBI

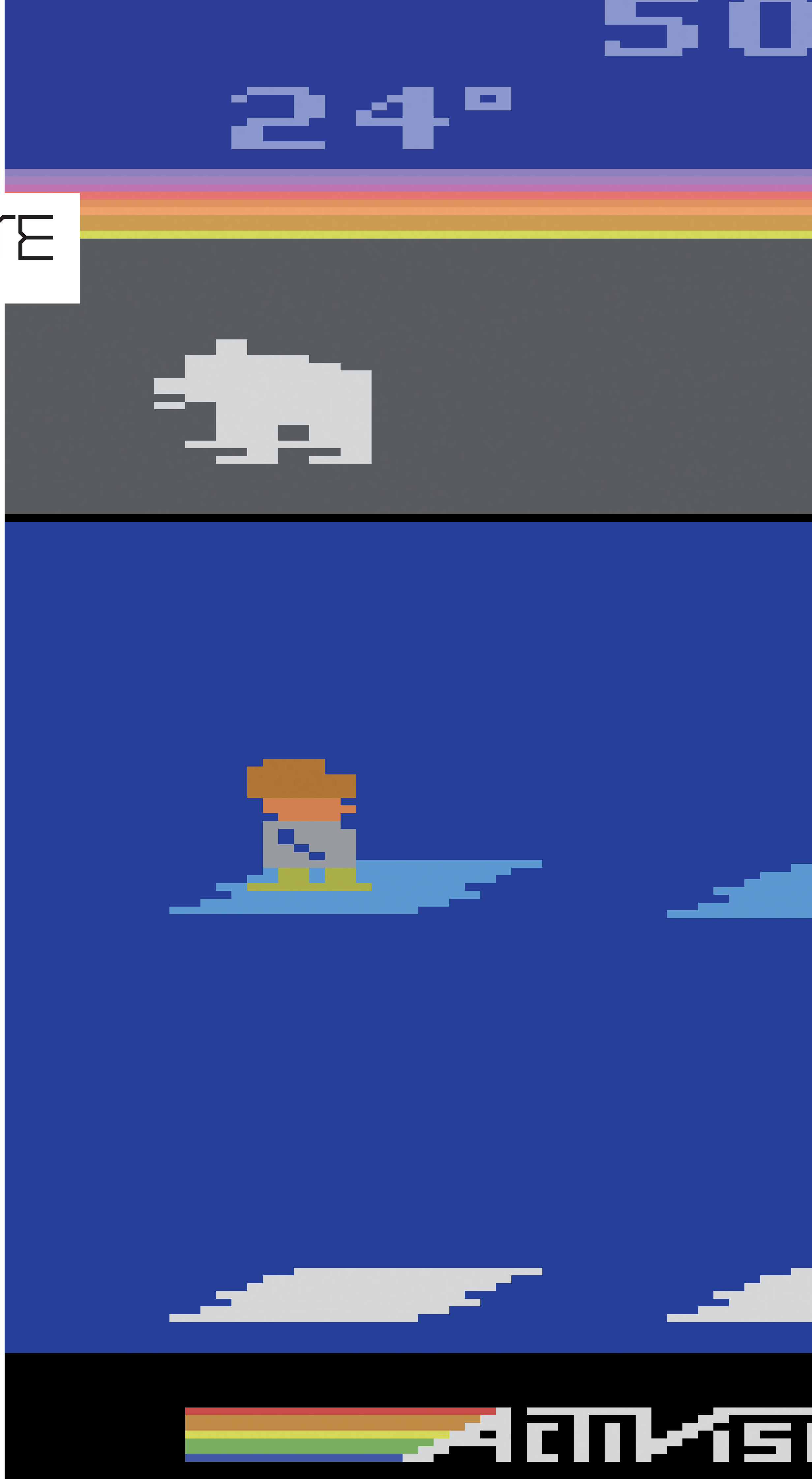
Foiled in the first *Shinobi* game, the Zeed return, more powerful than before, slaughter the Oboro clan and kidnap Joe's girlfriend, Naoko. Joe, baying for revenge, sets about getting some payback.



SHINOBI III: RETURN OF THE NINJA MASTER

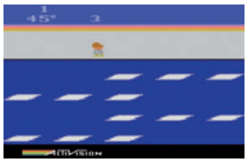
Neo Zeed has returned once again, this time with a new leader, the mysterious Shadow Master. Joe Musashi, the last remaining Oboro Shinobi, sets out to put a stop to his arch enemy one final time.



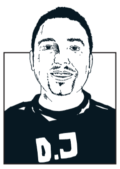


FROSTBITE

SO COOL IT'S HOT



- **PUBLISHER:** ACTIVISION
- **RELEASED:** 1983
- **GENRE:** PLATFORMER
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ATARI 2600
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £20+



HISTORY

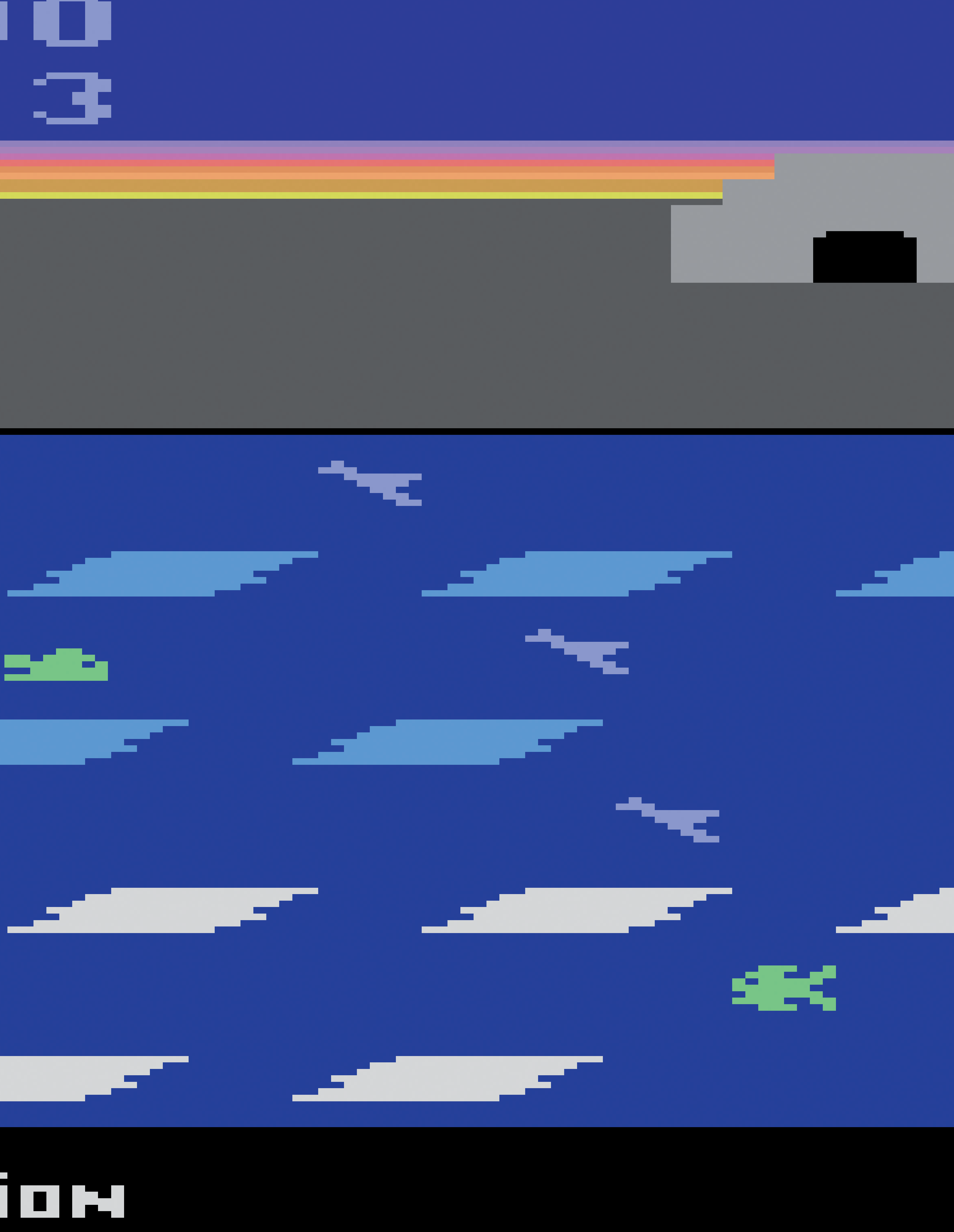
If you've access to an Atari 2600, head to eBay, seek out a copy of Activision's *Frostbite*, and be prepared to be blown away by one of the greatest videogames to ever star an Eskimo.

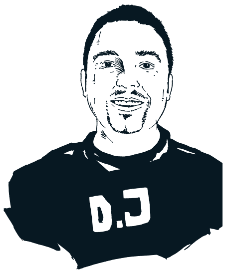
The brainchild of Steve Cartwright, who worked on a number of other 2600 titles including *Plaque Attack*, *Seaquest* and *Barnstorming*, *Frostbite* is a typically slick release from Activision that effortlessly combines elements of *Frogger* and *Q*bert* to create a genuinely engaging platformer that's as fun to play as it's fiendishly addictive.

Taking control of Frostbite Bailey, all you're required to do is hop back and forth across the ice floes that periodically pass by. Jumping on a floe changes it to a different colour and adds a block to the igloo Bailey is building; once all four floes have changed colour, you restart the process until your new home is finally built.

Initially the only hazards Bailey has to worry about are low flying birds and his own jumps – landing in the icy water results in a lost life. But as the levels progress, you'll deal with crabs and a vicious polar bear that patrols the top part of the screen – and otherwise the only safe area in the game – chasing you off screen if you get too close to him. Add in fish that can be picked up for additional bonus points and *Frostbite* gets very addictive, very quickly.

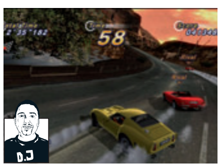
A simple score attack game at its heart – probably one of the reasons why I love it so – *Frostbite* constantly pushes you to better yourself, but never feels unfair when you get pushed off a floe for the third time in a row. It may lack the inventiveness of other Activision titles like *Ghostbusters*, *Pitfall!* Or *H.E.R.O.* but it's nevertheless a wonderful little game that boasts tight controls, perfectly balanced gameplay and that constant 'just one more go' factor that so many other titles seem to lack. Track it down as soon as possible. You won't be disappointed.



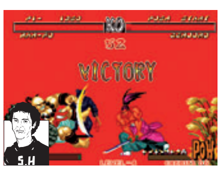


» After months of fairly average releases, Xbox Live Arcade gets the awesome Peggle and OutRun Live Arcade. We've even found time this month to get to grips with Bionic Commando and another SNK compilation.

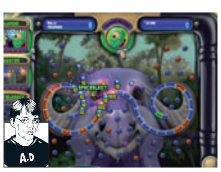
PICKS OF THE MONTH



DARRAN
OutRun Online Arcade
I absolutely adore this game. Yes it's cut down, but it's still amazing and a bargain for £8.



STUART
Samurai Shodown Anthology
This is easily my favourite game of the month, because I keep beating Darran at it.



ASH
Peggle
I've tried to stop playing, I really have, but it keeps pulling me back in for one more go.

» OUTRUN ONLINE ARCADE

PSN



» [Live Arcade] *OutRun Online Arcade* is filled with beautiful imagery that will take your breath away.

GO DEEPER
The facts behind OutRun Online Arcade

» The original three *OutRun* tunes – Splash Wave, Magical Sound Shower and Passing Breeze – were remixed by Richard Jacques.

» *OutRun 2 SP* was originally released in arcades in 2004. The SP stands for SPecial Tours.

» Other retro-inspired titles by Sumo Digital include *Virtua Tennis: World Tour*, *New International Track & Field* and *Sega Superstars Tennis*.

OutRun Online Arcade

SEGA'S BEAUTIFUL RACER JUST KEEPS ON GIVING

INFORMATION

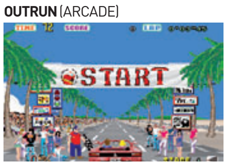
- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PSN
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** XBOX LIVE ARCADE
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £7.99
- » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- » **DEVELOPER:** SUMO DIGITAL
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-6

BRIEF HISTORY

» *OutRun* first set arcades alight in 1986 thanks to its stunning tunes, sublime gameplay and blisteringly fast visuals. Numerous sequels and updates appeared, but it wasn't until the arrival of *OutRun 2* in 2003 that the original was eventually surpassed. This latest release is a port of *OutRun2 SP*.

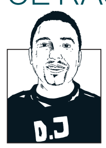
WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD
OUTRUN (ARCADE)



▽ SOMETHING NEW
RIDGE RACER 7 (PS3)





Complete and utter joy. That's what you experience when you race at breakneck speeds through the undulating hills and dizzying bends of *OutRun Online Arcade*. Granted, there are a few little niggles that really shouldn't have made the final release, but when a game comes along and fills you with so much love that if feels like your heart just might explode, we're prepared to look past its minor imperfections.

Those expecting a full-blown version of *OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast* are going to be in for a bit of a shock as this is nothing more than a virtually perfect – compression means that some of the voices sound a bit weird and there's an annoying pause when you pass the finish line – port of *OutRun 2 SP*. So there are no *Coast 2 Coast*, original audio or *OutRun 2* tracks (all prime targets for downloadable content, we'd imagine).

However, what you do get is a stunningly beautiful-looking game that constantly challenges you to perfect your best times and offers you a pure racing experience that's virtually unmatched by any other arcade racer. Yes you can complete the game in less than five minutes, but that simply means you can leap back into the driving seat that little bit quicker. Like the best shooters, *OutRun* constantly drags you back for one more drive and while there are only 15 stages to race through, they've been put together with so much care and attention that you'll never fail to be impressed by them. Online leaderboards seal the deal, meaning that there's always the opportunity to better the scores of your friends.

Add in an exhilarating multiplayer mode that allows you to race against five other players and *OutRun Online Arcade* represents exceptional value for money, more so if you pick up the slightly cheaper Xbox Live version. Let's just hope that there's enough interest in this for Sega to commit to future online projects. Projects like *Afterburner Climax* and *Daytona*.

OPINION



I can understand why people would be put off by Sumo's latest release. It lacks some of the features of the disc based *OutRuns*, the online multiplayer is still buggy and it actually costs more than a preowned disc would. But it's still a full 3D arcade game on my Xbox hard drive and for that I love it.
Ashley Day

In a nutshell

No doubt the cynics will be moaning about the few minor niggles that *OutRun Online Arcade* possesses, but that's because they refuse to be filled by the joy this amazing racer offers.

» Scores

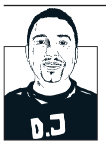
Presentation	65%
Graphics	91%
Sound	93%
Playability	97%
Addictivity	98%

Overall 95%

Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Echoes Of Time

IF DIABLO WAS RIDICULOUSLY CUTE

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** NDS » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** Wii » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £29.99 » **PUBLISHER:** SQUARE ENIX » **DEVELOPER:** SQUARE ENIX » **PLAYERS:** 1-4



With the traditional *Final Fantasy* games sticking to the tried and tested RPG route, the *Crystal Chronicles* sub-franchise has now turned into a fully fledged dungeon hack. Not that we're complaining, mind you, as this latest offering not only improves on the enjoyable *Rings Of Fate,* but is also the first game ever to be fully compatible with both the DS and the Wii. Admittedly this means that the Wii version takes something of a graphical hit – although it still looks rather nice – but the end result is an amazingly fun dungeon crawler that players can effortlessly jump in and out of.

While there's a story involving a girl inflicted with crystal sickness, it's little more than a convenient setup to take you to the next dungeon. Starting off with just a single character, it's not long before you get to team up with three other heroes (controlled by some excellent AI if no friends are on hand) and you can start answering quests, gaining experience and taking on huge behemoths.

As with *Rings Of Fate*, the sections/dungeons that you explore become more dangerous gradually, while there's a huge range of elaborate puzzles to complete as the game progresses. It does admittedly get rather samey, but let's face it, that never harmed older examples like *Diablo*. Regardless of whether you're soloing with the AI comrades or going toe-to-toe with a few friends, *Echoes Of Time* always remains great fun. What more could you want?

» Scores

Presentation	90%
Graphics	73%
Sound	88%
Playability	81%
Addictivity	77%
Overall	**82%**

NDS



» [Wii] It's not the best looking Wii game, but playing *Echoes of Time* remains an enjoyable experience..



OPINION



This has been a lot of fun, with Darran on the Wii version and me supporting him on the DS. It admittedly gets repetitive and the story is woeful, but it's a dungeon hack. What did you expect? Definately worth playing if you enjoy the genre though.

Stuart Hunt

Wii



Tenchu: Shadow Assassins

» **SYSTEM:** Wii
» **PRICE:** £39.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1

» **The *Tenchu* franchise** has suffered from diminishing returns for some time now, and while this latest effort is a surprising amount of fun, it's obvious the series needs a serious overhaul. Here, the stealth-based gameplay and assassinations – handled using the Remote and Nunchuk – are just enough to keep you playing through till the end.

» Score **70%**

PC



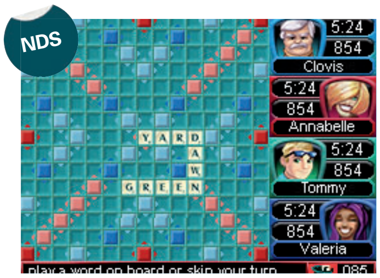
Stonekeep

» **SYSTEM:** PC
» **PRICE:** $5.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1

» **Stonekeep was hardly** cutting-edge when first released – it suffered from a five-year delay – so it's hardly surprising that it looks rather antiquated now. Despite this, there's still something charming about Interplay's game and while it lacks the atmosphere and style of *Eye Of The Beholder 2* or *Dungeon Keeper*, it's nevertheless an entertaining little romp. Good clean, if rather repetitive, fun.

» Score **68%**

NDS



Scrabble: 2009 Edition

» **SYSTEM:** NDS
» **PRICE:** £19.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1-4

» **Ignore the truly** horrific story mode and indulge in the good old game of *Scrabble*. There are a variety of new gameplay modes to choose from, the tiles are easy to manipulate, while the multiplayer mode has been dramatically improved over 2007's effort. The use of American slang is annoying, but this otherwise plays a very solid game.

» Score **75%**

Live Arcade



Crystal Defenders

» **SYSTEM:** LIVE ARCADE
» **PRICE:** 800 POINTS » **PLAYERS:** 1

» **Tower defence games** are all the rage on the iPhone, but this is the first (to our knowledge) to appear on Xbox Live Arcade. While the Tactics-styled graphics and theme - you use well known character classes and constantly upgrade them - look really cute, it lacks the excitement generated by similar titles. There's an unmistakable blandness to the title, which makes it a dull, if gorgeous looking experience.

» Score **60%**

Mario Power Tennis

ONE WII-MAKE YOU'RE BEST OFF LEAVING

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** Wii » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £29.99 » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO » **DEVELOPER:** CAMELOT » **PLAYERS:** 1-4



» [Wii] Power shots still exist on the Wii version and they're still as annoying as they were on the GameCube.



After being recently wowed by Nintendo's Wii reworking of *Pikmin*, we were expecting similar things from *Mario Power Tennis*. Sadly, it's not to be and while there are many things we like about *Mario Power Tennis* – its polished visuals, great presentation and numerous gameplay modes – it's just too damn fiddly to control.

You'd think that a tennis game would be ideally suited to the Wii, and yet somehow the amazingly simplistic controls of the original GameCube game just haven't carried over here. It's all too easy to pull off the wrong shot because the Remote hasn't picked the right one, while powering up shots has also changed, meaning it's really hard to accurately place your shots.

Basically this latest version of *Mario Power Tennis* has been made for the



lowest common denominator, and while it's fun with a group of friends, it's now lacking many of the gameplay elements that made the N64 and GameCube versions so much fun to play through.

There's still a huge amount to do, with a variety of mini-games to play, plenty of different courts to practise on and a pleasing number of characters to get to grips with, but the unresponsiveness of the controls means that you never feel fully in control. Our advice is to stick with the GameCube original or wait until the N64 version is available for download.

OPINION



Being a fan of Wii tennis, I was expecting this to be a far more polished effort from Nintendo, doing justice to the original GameCube game. Sadly, it's not to be and while it looks lovely and has some wonderful presentation, it can be a bit of a git to play. What a shame.

Stuart Hunt

» Scores

Presentation	85%
Graphics	83%
Sound	76%
Playability	56%
Addictivity	55%

Overall 60%

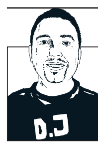


» [Live Arcade] This character's special power is a handy multiball that's a great way of raising your score.

Peggle

THE BEST PUZZLER ON LIVE ARCADE

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** LIVE ARCADE » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** PC, MAC » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** 800 POINTS » **PUBLISHER:** POPCAP GAMES » **DEVELOPER:** POPCAP » **PLAYERS:** 1-4



Already a massive success on the PC and Mac, PopCap's *Peggle* finally arrives on Xbox Live Arcade and it's bloody brilliant.

The object of the game is simplicity itself. You have ten balls that you must fire into a screen full of elaborately placed pegs. Whenever your ball hits a peg you'll receive a set amount of points (depending on the coloured peg you hit) and every hit peg nets you a multiplier. Pegs also disappear once they've been hit, meaning that as the game progresses you really have to think about where you'll be firing your next ball.

Score 25,000 points and you'll receive a free ball to continue the fight; conversely, you can try landing your fired ball into the bucket that lazily drifts backwards and forwards across the bottom of the screen.

The aim of the game is simply to clear the 25 orange pegs found on each stage – easier said than



done because they are often surrounded by fiendishly placed blue pegs – and you will then move onto the next stage.

It's a ridiculously simple concept – for many players possibly a little too simple – but it's been crafted with such care and attention that you can't help but fall in love with it. Add in a variety of different bosses to beat – each with their own special power-ups – an insanely fun multiplayer mode and some truly cheerful visuals and *Peggle* becomes the most addictive game to currently grace the Xbox Live Arcade.

OPINION



If any proof were needed that the line between casual and hardcore gaming was blurring then Peggle is that proof. It's ridiculously easy to pick up and play but it has an addictive quality that never lets go, and a scoring system that will challenge even the most seasoned gamers.

Ashley Day

» Scores

Presentation	90%
Graphics	85%
Sound	88%
Playability	96%
Addictivity	97%

Overall 94%

Broken Sword II: The Smoking Mirror

GOG.COM AND REVOLUTION SOFTWARE JOIN FORCES

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PC » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** $5.99 » **PUBLISHER:** GOG.COM » **DEVELOPER:** REVOLUTION SOFTWARE » **PLAYERS:** 1



Crikey, we've only just made our way through George Stobbart's original adventure, but here's the PC sequel courtesy of Revolution Software and GoodOldGames.com. If you've recently enjoyed *The Director's Cut* of *Broken Sword* on the Wii or DS, you may be disappointed to hear that this is nothing more than a direct port. On the other hand it remains a great little adventure, and although not quite up to the standards of the original, is definitely worth playing through, especially as its bargain price point.

This time around, George and Nico get mixed up with a Mayan cult, an evil Aztec god and a solar eclipse and although the story's not quite as gripping, some fantastic voice acting, atmospheric music and some genuinely comedic moments help it along.

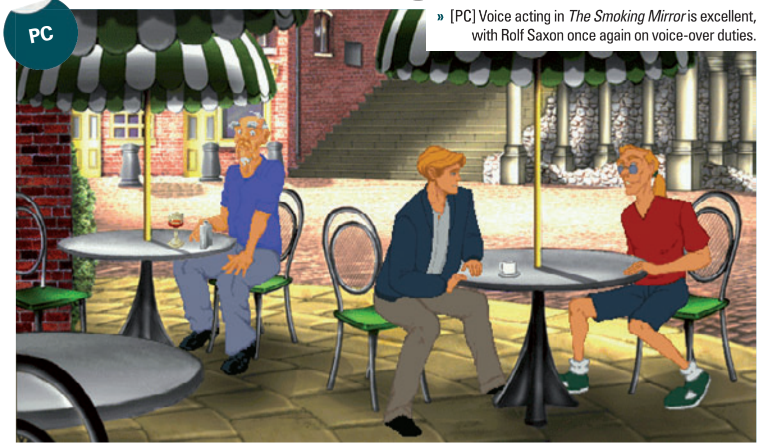
Otherwise it's business as usual, with a simple but easy-to-use interface that starts off with an extremely simple puzzle, before landing you with some really devilish head-scratchers that will take newcomers to the game a good amount of perseverance to solve. Fortunately, nothing's quite up to 'that goat puzzle' from the original game and the beautifully drawn locations and interesting characters will constantly spur you on whenever you find yourself getting stuck.

With *Shadow Of The Templars* last month and *Fate Of Atlantis* next issue, we're having something of a point-and-click renaissance. Let's hope it continues, as we'd love to crack on with parts 3 and 4 now.

» Scores

Presentation	88%
Graphics	90%
Sound	90%
Playability	89%
Addictivity	85%
Overall	**89%**

PC



» [PC] Voice acting in *The Smoking Mirror* is excellent, with Rolf Saxon once again on voice-over duties.



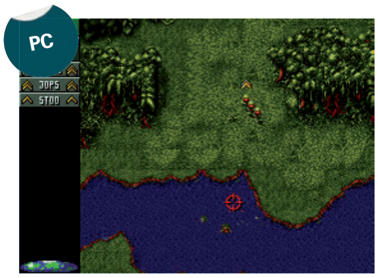
OPINION



This is a genuinely entertaining game that one again boasts some superb voice acting. The puzzles are a lot easier as well, so I've not been getting as stuck as often as I did with *Shadow Of The Templars: The Director's Cut*. Highly recommended.

Darran Jones

PC



Cannon Fodder

» **SYSTEM:** PC
» **PRICE:** $5.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1

» **Sensible Software's excellent** *Cannon Fodder* has just arrived at GOG.com and it is still amazing fun to play through. It can sometimes be a little hard to pick out enemy soldiers against certain backdrops, but that's our only niggle with this otherwise brilliant blaster that requires brains as well as a quick trigger finger. Jon Hare was right: war has never been this much fun.

» Score **89%**

NDS



XG-Blast!

» **SYSTEM:** NDS
» **PRICE:** £24.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1-4

» **Fans of *Robotron: 2084*** or *Geometry Wars* should check out the latest title from Rising Star Games, as it's a solid (if predictable) arena-based blaster that's as old-school as they come. There are a variety of power-ups to pick up, rock-hard bosses to take down and wave after wave of never-ending enemies. Solid and entertaining, the only downside is that hand cramps set in after extended play sessions.

» Score **74%**

PC



Screamer

» **SYSTEM:** PC
» **PRICE:** $5.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1

» **We remember being** wowed by *Screamer* when we first saw it back in 1995. Sadly, time has not been kind to Graffiti's once visually stunning racer and it's now looking mighty tired. We can forgive the short draw distance, but the clunky controls, lack of variety and bland track design is now making it feel incredibly dated. It's fun for a while, but we'd probably steer clear as there are far better racers out there.

» Score **62%**

360



Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust

» **SYSTEM:** XBOX 360
» **PRICE:** £19.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1

» **Oh dear!** Codemasters and Team17 have turned a once great series into a collection of poor platforming sections and naff mini-games, thrown in some really offensive and unfunny humour and in doing so, have forgotten what made the *Leisure Suit Larry* games so enjoyable. Play this and it will just leave a bad taste in your mouth.

» Score **25%**



» [360] These robots may look like trouble, but they're nothing several rocket launchers won't sort out.

★ GO DEEPER

The facts behind Bionic Commando

» **The Japanese NES version was littered with references to Nazis and featured Hitler as the final boss.**

» **The NES version of the game was released on the GBA in 2006 with *Mighty Final Fight* and the NES version of *Strider*.**

★ WHY NOT TRY

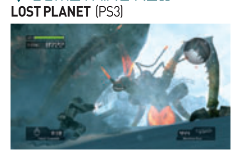
▼ SOMETHING OLD

BIONIC COMMANDO (NES)



▽ SOMETHING NEW

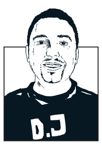
LOST PLANET (PS3)





LOOK OUT STEVE AUSTIN, YOU'VE GOT COMPETITION

Bionic Commando



Capcom can do no wrong at the moment. *Street Fighter IV* has a level of awesomeness that can actually hurt you, while even *Resident Evil 5* (despite being a little disappointing) was still enjoyable.

Now, though, we come to Capcom's biggest gamble: the resurrection of a franchise that, bar the recently released Xbox Live Arcade and PSN game, has been absent from most gamers' lives for the past decade. Amazingly it has paid off.

Admittedly, sales will eventually decide the success of Grin's latest effort, but from our point of view we're ecstatically happy with this reboot. Sure, the voice acting and plot constantly stray on the wrong side of hokey, but it's the gameplay that's important and it doesn't disappoint.

Initially, controlling Nathan Spencer's Bionic Arm is a real pain and you'll constantly overshoot or fall short of targets. All of a sudden, though, it all clicks and you'll find the metallic contraption to be essential, as it allows you to do everything from rapidly scale buildings, to using nearby objects to hurl at your foes. Fans of *Rearmed* will recognise all the moves well implemented here, while newcomers or those who remember the original arcade game will be more than happy with this slicker 2009 edition, even if he does have a needlessly foul potty mouth. Nathan's also equipped with a solid range of weaponry, ranging from rocket launchers to sniper rifles, while there are a huge number of gigantic bosses to contend with.

Then there's how well Grin has actually segued 2D gameplay into Spencer's huge, open-ended 3D world, even if the stages aren't as non-linear as you'd expect. Deadly water – Nathan sinks rapidly thanks to his metallic appendage – covers most of the ground while radiation cuts off higher areas. In short you're effectively playing a 2D game, albeit in a 3D world. It's not handled quite as well as in *Metroid Prime*, but it's still very good.

One thing that you won't like, however, is *Bionic Commando*'s sheer difficulty. It's never unfair, but true to its arcade parent you have to fight for every inch of ground made. *Bionic Commando* certainly looks like an old game, but it's steeped in arcade heritage. Pick it up if you're after something a bit different.

INFORMATION

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** XBOX 360

» **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** PS3, PC

» **RELEASED:** OUT NOW

» **PRICE:** £39.99

» **PUBLISHER:** CAPCOM

» **DEVELOPER:** GRIN

» **PLAYERS:** 1

BRIEF HISTORY

» *Bionic Commando* first sprung into action in 1987 and immediately set itself apart from other platformers thanks to its unique gameplay mechanism. A sequel appeared on the NES a year later and was eventually followed up by two Game Boy outings and *Bionic Commando: Rearmed*, which is also by Grin.

OPINION



It's tricky learning the ropes – okay, the mechanical arm – but the inventive gameplay, rock-hard challenges and stunning visuals certainly help. When all's said and done, this a more than worthy update and a great transition from 2D to that often difficult third dimension.

Stuart Hunt

In a nutshell

Yes it's tough, but it's also inventive, looks amazing and is immensely enjoyable to boot. Basically everything you'd expect from a next-gen reboot. Now give these guys *Strider*, Capcom.

» Scores

Presentation	90%
Graphics	87%
Sound	88%
Playability	85%
Addictivity	87%

Overall 85%

» SAMURAI SHODOWN ANTHOLOGY

INFORMATION

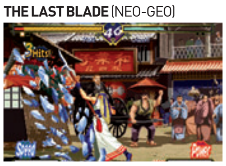
- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** Wii
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** PSP, PS2
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £29.99
- » **PUBLISHER:** IGNITION
- » **DEVELOPER:** SNK PLAYMORE
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

BRIEF HISTORY

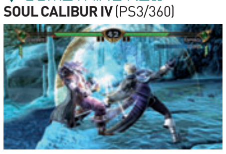
» SNK's *Samurai Shodown* franchise first appeared in 1993 and instantly proved popular thanks to solid play mechanics, fantastic visuals and hilarious Engrish. This is the first time that the first six games in the series have been available on a compilation.

WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD
THE LAST BLADE (NEO-GEO)



▽ SOMETHING NEW
SOUL CALIBUR IV (PS3/360)



GO DEEPER

The facts behind Samurai Shodown Anthology

» Like many games of the time, blood and various fatalities were taken out of the Western version of the franchise.

» In addition to the *Shodown* games, lead character Haohmaru has also appeared in *Neo-Geo Tennis Coliseum* and dating sim *Days Of Memories*.



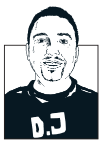
» [Wii] With over 30 different characters to master, this anthology's longevity is assured.



» [Wii] The dark tone of part III put many fans off the series, but we actually quite like it.

NOT COMPLETE, BUT STILL BLOODY GOOD

Samurai Shodown Anthology



SNK Playmore's compilations have been a bit hit and miss over the last couple of years.

The general rule of thumb appears to be that the PS2 and PSP versions are genuinely weaker than their Wii counterparts (with the PSP versions in particular suffering from glitchy sound and lengthy loading times that can really ruin the experience). *Samurai Shodown Anthology* continues this tradition, meaning that the Wii outing is definitely the version to plump for.

Instead of covering the entire *Samurai Shodown* franchise, SNK Playmore has instead focused on the five games that were released on the AES and MVS and the sole title that's currently available on the Atomiswave; so no *Samurai Shodown 64* or *Samurai Shodown RPG* (to name but two). Despite this, the end result is a surprisingly entertaining package, due to the varied play mechanics between all six games. Add in the fact that there are over 30 characters – spread across the six titles – to master and *Shodown* offers plenty of depth for the hardcore beat-'em-up enthusiast.

Emulation is also of an extremely high standard, and while the presentation is best described as functional, everything in-game is exceptionally polished. You're effectively getting some very expensive AES games for a very small outlay. It's worth noting that this extends only to the Wii outing, as the PS2 and PSP are nowhere near the same high standards. Indeed, the PSP outing is a particular disappointment with insane loading times and later games briefly freezing while the machine loads in special moves.

Another thing to take into account is while SNK has added a number of different play mechanics – aerial attacks, parrying, slash and bust characters, cancelling moves – you've still effectively got six games that are fairly similar to each other; wonderful if you're a fan of the series, not as appealing if you're not.

And that's the biggest problem we have with SNK's recent compilations: in terms of content, there's not really a lot to them. When you have packs like Sega's *Ultimate Mega Drive Collection* and Namco's incoming compilation offering you 30-plus games, six seems rather slight, even if some of them are bloody good. Pick it up if you love your fighters.



» [Wii] Fans will be pleased to hear that all the blood and guts have been retained for these latest versions.

In a nutshell

It lacks the appeal of broader compilations, but this is nevertheless a strong effort that offers great emulation, solid gameplay and near instant load times – providing you buy the Wii version, of course.

OPINION



This Wii offering is absolutely great. Granted, you could argue that you'll need two classic controllers in order to get the most out of it, but most RG readers are likely to have them already. Variety obviously suffers due to the similarity of the games, but this is otherwise an extremely slick package that beat-'em-up fans will love.

Stuart Hunt

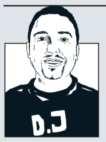
» Scores

Presentation	40%
Graphics	89%
Sound	92%
Playability	93%
Addictivity	80%
Overall	**81%**

Dropship

IF THRUST LIVED IN YOUR POCKET

» **SYSTEM:** IPHONE » **PRICE:** £1.19 » **GET IT FROM:** ITUNES



Ngmoco isn't the most prolific of iPhone developers but it sure knows how to get the best out of it. From the moment *Dropship* loads up, you know you're in for a polished product.

Presentation is excellent thanks to clean menus, fantastic music and a selection of Xbox Live-style achievements to collect, while the same care and attention has been bestowed on *Dropship* itself. Indeed, what you have here is effectively a brand new update of *Thrust* that works brilliantly thanks to the iPhone's touch-screen and ngmoco's careful implementation of its controls. One finger is used to control your ship's gravity, while another takes care of directional fire. As with *Thrust*, you have to constantly take your craft's speed into effect and use counter measures to stop you from simply ploughing into floors and cavern walls.

Levels consist of you flying into increasingly bigger, more complicated cavern systems in search of stranded men and a precious pod – once it has been recovered, you can move onto the next stage. With 18 stages to complete and six levels currently available to download, there's plenty here to justify *Dropship*'s meagre £1.19 asking price. Add in some superb wire-frame visuals and the aforementioned great soundtrack and you end up with a great take on a classic game that becomes very difficult to turn off.

» Scores

Presentation	88%
Graphics	94%
Sound	92%
Playability	95%
Addictivity	97%
Overall	**94%**



» Successfully guide your green pod to the cavern's entrance and you can move to the next stage.





OPINION

DropShip was the game that confirmed to me that, yes, this iPhone gaming thing could work. Sublime dual-thumb controls, beautiful graphics and the best bits of Thrust and Gravitar—along with a price 20p cheaper than Thrust was in 1986—make it a minor modern classic.

Craig Grannal

Aqua Moto Racing

» **SYSTEM:** IPHONE » **PRICE:** £2.39
» **GET IT FROM:** ITUNES

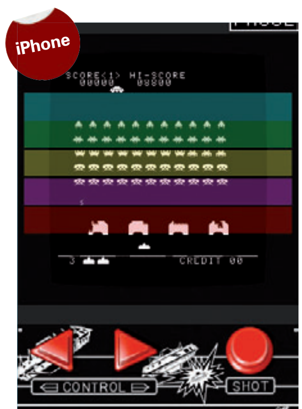


» Those expecting a portable *Wave Race* are going to be severely disappointed. While *Aqua Moto Racing* certainly looks the biz with its outrageously good visuals and decent water physics, it's let down by controls which, whilst very good, can't hope to emulate the precise analogue input that *Wave Race* boasts. It puts many other iPhone racers to shame, but they'll still be instances where you don't turn far enough, which makes it frustrating when you're trying to master the included time trial mode. There's plenty of value for money, though, with 18 tracks to race around and the ability to customise your jetski.

» Score **74%**

Space Invaders

» **SYSTEM:** IPHONE » **PRICE:** £2.99
» **GET IT FROM:** ITUNES

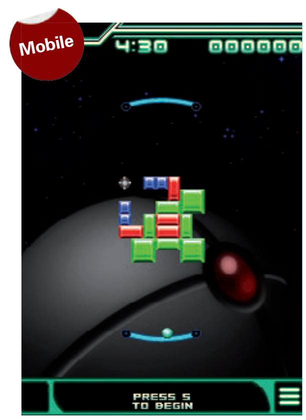


» Taito is fairly new to the iPhone scene, but its first few games have impressed us. What we have here is a nigh on perfect rendition of the 1978 coin-op, with authentic sound effects and surprisingly solid controls. Unfortunately, compared to *Pac-Man*, *Space Invaders* hasn't aged quite so well, so the plodding gameplay is fine for the odd game here and there, but soon becomes monotonous after extended play. Still, it's a decent price and is a lot easier than carrying an actual arcade machine around in your pocket.

» Score **70%**

Absolute Twin Blades

» **SYSTEM:** MOBILE (J2ME FORMAT) » **PRICE:** £3+
» **GET IT FROM:** WWW.GLOBALFUN.COM

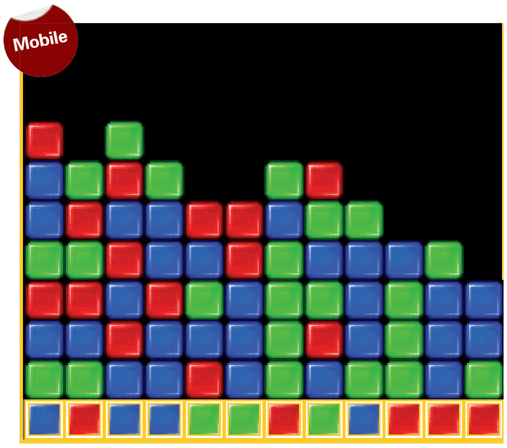


» Hurrah! A fresh, fun spin on *Breakout* that works brilliantly on your average mobile. You have to clear a wall of bricks, like in *Breakout*, but the difference here is that you control two bats directly opposite either side of the wall, which you can rotate around the centre blocks. It's a crazy take on *Breakout*, snooker and *Pong*, because you're constantly passing the ball between the two bats so it doesn't fly off into space. This is crazy, addictive stuff thanks to its tight controls, inventive level designs and fun power-ups. Highly recommended.

» Score **88%**

Gem Drop & Super Collapse

» **SYSTEM:** MOBILE (J2ME FORMAT) » **PRICE:** £3+
» **GET IT FROM:** HTTP://WWW.REALNETWORKS.COM/



» **Originality is certainly** lacking from this latest dual pack release by Real Networks, but it's nevertheless a hell of a lot of fun. *Gem Drop* has you matching up single gems as they fall from the top of the screen (you need to match four or more to clear them). *Super Collapse* sees you matching coloured blocks that slowly appear at the bottom of the screen (group three of more together and they'll disappear) with the goal being to stop them reaching the top of the screen. Yes it's basic stuff, but for the price point it definitely shouldn't be ignored.

» Score **82%**



Saucelifter

» **SYSTEM:** IPHONE » **PRICE:** £1.19
» **GET IT FROM:** ITUNES

» **If there's one** thing the iPhone has plenty of, it's *Choplifter* clones. Well, Paul Pridham has his own take on the popular game, and while it's not the best we've ever played, it's a polished effort. The tilt controls take a while to get used to, but once you've sussed how to manoeuvre your saucer and fire at enemy tanks and guns, everything falls into place. Indeed, what we like most about *Saucelifter* is the sheer number of enemies that are thrown at you, ensuring that the action remains fast, frantic and furious. Great stuff.

» Score **75%**

Flick Fishing

» **SYSTEM:** IPHONE » **PRICE:** 59 PENCE
» **GET IT FROM:** ITUNES



» **This has been** out for ages now, but it's such good fun and so competitively priced that we just had to include it. All you have to do is flick your phone to cast your line, then wait for the fish to bite, reel them in by circling your finger and then look for your next catch. It's amazingly simple stuff, but it's so addictive that it becomes hard to put down. Add in an enjoyable mission mode (that's surprisingly deep) and the ability to show off your best catches to your friends and *Flick Fishing* becomes an essential download.

» Score **89%**

Cameltry

» **SYSTEM:** IPHONE » **PRICE:** £2.99
» **GET IT FROM:** ITUNES



» **Unlike** ***Space Invaders***, Taito's second iPhone effort this month is based on an obscure arcade game from 1989 that saw you rotating a ball (via a spinner) through a series of convoluted mazes. Two decades on and the concept remains exactly the same, although you now use either touch or tilt controls to navigate your tiny globe. The former system works far better, but no matter what option you plump for, you're still left with an extremely playable puzzle game that you'll constantly find yourself returning to. Definitely recommended if you enjoyed the original or are after something a little different.

» Score **84%**

CHATTER BOX

» After being blown away by last month's *iDracula*, we managed to catch up with programmer **Pavel Kupriyanov** to find out if anything else was planned for the popular app…



Retro Gamer: From where did the concept for iDracula come?
Pavel Kupriyanov: The concept was first invented by Andrey, our artist, ages ago. He made a few graphical concepts and just left it. We wanted to make it on a PDA platform but gave up due to poor performance and low resolution. We initially planned to turn iDracula around in ten days, but we decided to add polish, so it took a little longer.

RG: How long did it take to create?
PK: It took about a month of very hard work from two people for the initial version. We really liked working on iDracula, which allowed us to push it extremely fast, using the power of enthusiasm. The updated version 1.1 greatly improved the game – it gained different maps, new game modes…

RG: How difficult was it to re-create convincing dual stick controls?
PK: Not difficult at all. I only spend few hours implementing this idea, and the idea was with me even before we started working on a project. You don't have many options in fact, when all you have is just a touch-screen with no buttons.

RG: You've just added a great update; can we expect any more?
PK: We have now stopped working on *iDracula* and have moved on. We are a small team after all, so we cannot afford to sit around updating one single project. However, we love it, so we'll definitely come out with a new game on this concept/universe. This can be either a new episode of *iDracula* with the same idea but different weapons/monsters/maps, or a highly anticipated sequel with story/progression, RPG system, lots of different rooms, and so on.

RG: What would you add to a future sequel?
PK: Lots of stuff. New weapons, a different perk system, more abilities to monsters (like digging out of the ground in front of you, or shooting arrows at you), a world map, probably NPCs.

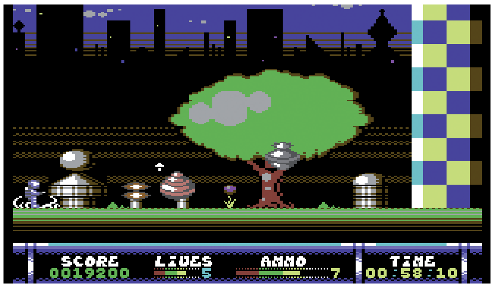


HOMEBREW

» The scene's latest news and reviews



It's another jam-packed hombrew section this month. Jason Kelk takes a look at an excellent new C64 release, while Darran takes a gander at a brand new title on Xbox Live's XNA service. Stuart handles remake duties with a look at a fantastic update of Three Weeks in Paradise, while we've even found time to interview Matt White about his loves of remakes. Phew!

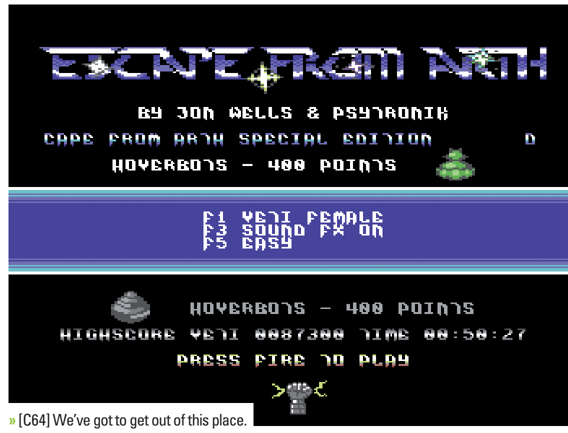


» [C64] Hanging out by the cyan gateway.



» [C64] Press the magic button, Brian!





» [C64] We've got to get out of this place.

WILL THE DYNAMIC DUO ESCAPE TO FIGHT AGAIN?

ESCAPE FROM ARTH



FORMAT: COMMODORE 64
DEVELOPED BY: JON WELLS
LINK: HTTP://WWW.PSYTRONIK.COM/
RELEASE DATE: 2008
PRICE: £1.99 (DOWNLOAD), £3.99 (TAPE OR DISK) OR £8.99 (DELUXE DISK)
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

The planet Arth is something of a desolate hell-hole and, despite being quite colourful, certainly isn't the sort of place you'd want to go for a holiday – partly because the only inhabitants are currently a generous helping of killing machines, but mostly due to the local star being about an hour away from making lots of planet-destroying fireworks! So, obviously, getting off Arth is a good idea. Would-be heroes Veti and Voto (who are female and male respectively, although their gender makes no discernable difference to the gameplay since they're robots) are pretty much up for escaping, since even machines don't want to be on a planet when it's in the process of boiling away into space.

But getting away cleanly isn't simply a matter of making a mad dash for the spaceport – instead, every location in the game is patrolled by the aforementioned lethal devices and the route to safety has been blocked off by a series of gateways that must be disabled by finding and throwing the appropriately colour-coded switches. And if that wasn't enough, the access code for the escape craft itself has been split into five chunks and distributed between the aggressors as well. But Voto and Veti aren't totally harmless: both came from the factory equipped with a jet-pack that allows them to zoom gracefully through the air, and a laser blaster for blowing away droids. Destroyed adversaries also conveniently leave collectables behind, including ammunition, extra lives, gun upgrades and shields.

Knowing your way around helps since the switches for each gateway are inconveniently placed so that they're nowhere near the gateway itself and the map is arranged in layers, making it possible for the player's robot to move through doorways that take it into or out of the environment. This system takes a little getting used to so, for the majority of players at least, Arth will require at least some mapping in order to avoid getting thoroughly lost; it does help that each of the doorways has been labelled with an arrow above it saying which way it goes.

As with previous Psytronik releases, *Escape From Arth* is well presented; the disk version offers a simple but effective menu whilst the tape has a good fast loader and both media feature the newly created loading picture based on the lovely inlay artwork. The game arrives in two distinct flavours: one is the shiny new Special Edition being looked at here; the other is Jon Wells's original release where Veti and Voto are firmly stuck on the ground and have to rely on curving shots upwards using the joystick diagonals if they're to destroy airborne nasties. Whilst that 1994 version, distributed by Wells himself, was a decent if difficult game due to the shot curving, the addition of the jet-pack has significantly altered how *Escape From Arth* handles and makes this new iteration far more playable, especially if you're the kind of person who enjoys blowing robots to smithereens… and how many people don't enjoy that?

90%

NEW GAMES NEEDED

If you have a homebrew project you would like to see featured then please contact us at:
retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

3D DEATHCHASE

REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

» **FORMAT:** DRAGON 32/64, TANDY COCO » **DEVELOPER:** JAMES MCKAY » **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.INDIGOBANQUET.ADSL24.CO.UK/COCO/DEATHCHASE/DEATHCHASE.HTM

There's nothing quite like zooming through a forest, pursuing motorbikes and taking pot-shots at tanks and helicopters – which explains the popularity of the Spectrum classic *Deathchase*, the recent CPC homebrew port and why there's now a second conversion, this time for the Dragon and Tandy Colour Computer series. The thrill of the high speed chase is all there, although the Dragon is using a lower resolution for the graphics and rather than the original's day and night stages it instead alternates between pursuits through a darkened forest and over Arctic wastes (due to hardware limitations. The sound has been pretty much converted verbatim from the 1983 original and is therefore sparse.

But *Deathchase* has always been about simple, playable action and, despite a few occasional issues caused by the less detailed graphics making it harder to see exactly what is happening, that is present and correct.

79%

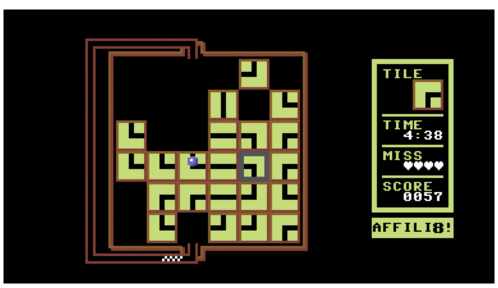




» [Dragon] Chasing death since 1983!



» [C64] Somebody set us up the bomb!



R8TRO

REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

» **FORMAT:** COMMODORE 64 » **DEVELOPER:** SIMON QUERNHORST
» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.QUERNHORST.DE/ATARI/

Simon Quernhorst's latest cartridge release *R8tro* is actually a compilation of eight smaller games. For action fans, *Pir8* and *Elev8* are both platform-based, *Sk8* involves jumping obstacles on a skateboard, *Extric8* has three players flying through twisting tunnels, while a plane must bomb a deserted city to land in *Elimin8*.

More cerebral options are the two-player number collector *Calcul8*, while *Loc8or* challenges one or two players to search the screen looking for a specific pattern, and *Affili8* is a variation on *Pipe Mania* where the player has to lay tracks mounted on tiles for a marble to roll over.

Their small size means that these games don't have much substance and some play more like previews; *Calcul8* doesn't notice when there are no moves left, *Pir8* feels empty without enemies, and *Elev8* and *Sk8* are both far too difficult to enjoy. Only *Affili8* really stands out, but it still lacks the variety needed to hold long-term interest; the others probably won't see more than a couple of plays.

63%

SLAM TILT

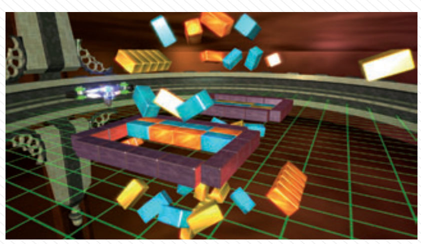
REVIEWED BY: DARRAN JONES

» **FORMAT:** XNA (XBOX 360) » **DEVELOPER:** BLACK STORM GAMES
» **DOWNLOAD:** XBOX COMMUNITY FOR 800 POINTS

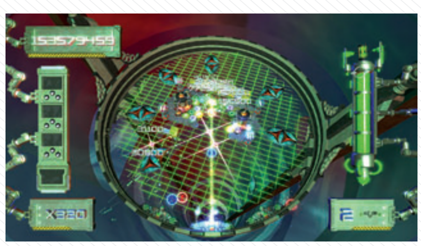
It's a good month for *Arkanoid* fans. *Slam* may lack the accessibility of *Absolute Twin Blades*, but it remains a solid and fun effort that's definitely worth picking up. Set in a spherical tunnel, blocks are displayed in the middle, while your craft/bat skirts along the tunnel's inside rim. Let your ball hit the sides and you'll lose precious energy, so later levels become a frenetic race around the inside rim as you desperately try to keep hold of your rogue ball. Fortunately, a magnet makes it slightly easier to recapture your wayward sphere (although there's a slight charge between captures), while a quick tap of the right analogue stick enables you to tilt the ball's direction if you find it going off course.

It's certainly more expensive than other Community games and the additional controls make it a little harder to click with than most *Arkanoid* clones, but the asking price can be seen in its superb aesthetics and worryingly addictive gameplay.

75%

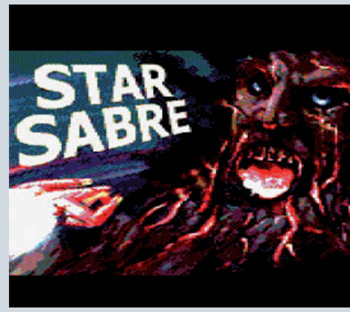


» [Xbox XNA] Keep your balls in check and bust those blocks.



WHAT'S BREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community



» [Amstrad CPC] *Star Sabre 128* is an expanded update.

» Wham

Back in issue 51 we played a rather nice CPC blaster called *Star Sabre*, mentioning that the sound was limited since everything was crammed into just 64K. Well, developer Paul Kooistra took that on board and with the recently released *Star Sabre 128* has significantly expanded the game itself, beefed up presentation and found space for a soundtrack too. *Star Sabre 128* is downloadable from http://starsabre.bigblog.com.au/



» [C64] The Competition Edition of *Armalyte* is coming.

» Blam

After announcing that they'll be republishing Apex Computer Productions' C64 platformer *Creatures* last month, Psytronik has secured an okay to distribute the sequel *Creatures 2* as well. Even more exciting is that it has approached developers Cyberdyne Systems and gained permission to release the previously unpublished Competition Edition of its classic C64 shoot-'em-up *Armalyte*. http://www.psytronik.com/ is the place to be looking for further news.

» Thank you, ma'am

Despite publisher CEZ GS shutting up shop earlier this year, the teams who produced the games continued regardless. The Mojon Twins have just released their second game in as many months: Nanako Descends To Hell, where the titular heroine must deal with Satan's minions whilst retrieving four pieces of magic amulet. If doing that in a bikini sounds fun, the Mojon Twins are at http://www.mojontwins.com/

HOMEBREW

» The scene's latest news and reviews

WHAT'S BREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community

» Sam gets remade

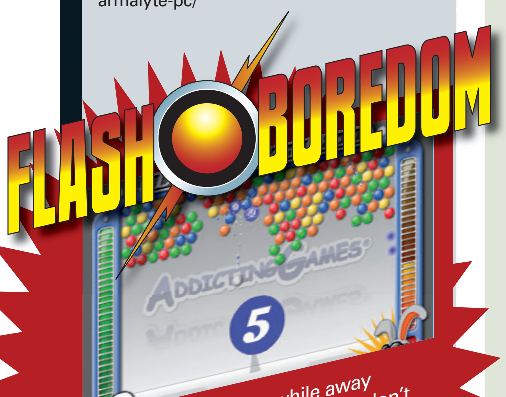
Making retro remakes can sometimes be a long, drawn out process, with some developers often halting their work due to other, often far more important commitments. We pray then that the same fate doesn't befall the rather funky remake of *Contact Sam Cruise*. Created by Retro Remakes poster vb64, it's already looking like a great, colourful update of the Spectrum original, a game we have many fond memories of. It's still a little way from being completed, but rest assured we'll be covering it as soon as it's finished.



» [PC] Ovine are awesome, so we're expecting a hit here.

» Ovine do Armalyte

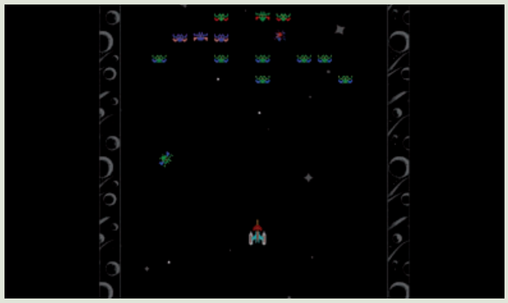
After making the excellent *Ultimate Bruce Lee*, you'd think that the Ovine boys would be happy to sit back on their laurels and bask in some well-deserved adulation. Well apparently that's not how they roll, as they're already hard at work on their next remake – hit C64 blaster *Armalyte*. No dates have been announced yet, but it's already looking pretty damned fine. Get the latest news on their blog at http://www.ovinebydesign.com/index.php/2009/04/20/armalyte-pc/



Want to know how to while away those boring office hours? Then don't miss out on **Retro Gamer**'s Flash game of the month. This month we look at ***Bubble Master***

TO ALL INTENTS and purposes this is *Puzzle Bobble*, except that the wall of bubbles above you fall randomly instead of all at the same time. There are also some nifty power-ups, meaning this is perfect fun if you like the original Taito classic. Download it from www.addictinggames.com/bubblemaster.html

REMAKES WE'VE BEEN PLAYING...



GALAXIAN

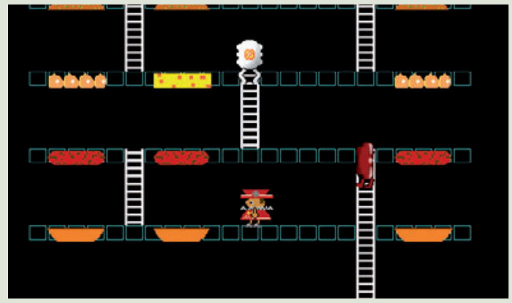
» **DOWNLOAD:** HTTP://PJSFREEWARE.SYNTHASITE.COM/RESOURCES/GALAXIAN.ZIP



It's common knowledge that we're not particularly big fans of *Space Invaders* or *Galaxian* at Retro Gamer.

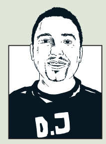
Putting our opinions aside for one moment, we're forced to admit that this effort is a an enjoyable take on the original coin-op game that retains its taxing gameplay but adds a fresh lick of paint to the visuals – most notably the cool scanline effect draped over the sprites and a 3D star-field whizzing towards you in the background – and allows you to move your ship about halfway up the screen.

My only gripe is that I did find the 3D background to be a little distracting when the action got a little hairy, but Darran didn't, so different strokes I guess.



MR WIMPY

» **DOWNLOAD:** HTTP://PJSFREEWARE.SYNTHASITE.COM/DOWNLOADS-3.PHP

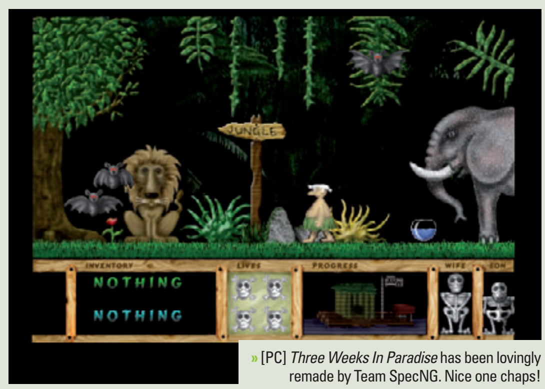


You can't get more retro or British than Wimpy, the big-nosed beefeater eatery was a real treat for me as a nipper. I used to love the fact that the meals came on plates, with cutlery, and everything on the menu was priced in pennies.

Anyway, this remake of the original Ocean Spectrum game by PJ Crossley is a palatable version. The original was a *Burger Time* clone, but with a hellish introductory level where Mr Wimpy had to obtain the ingredients for his tasty burgers while avoiding moving manholes. This update is enjoyable, but we just wish that more care had been given to the visuals - the burgers don't look particularly appetising and Mr Wimpy himself has a tiny nose and eyeballs!

Remake of the Month

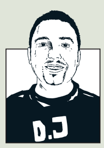




» [PC] *Three Weeks In Paradise* has been lovingly remade by Team SpecNG. Nice one chaps!

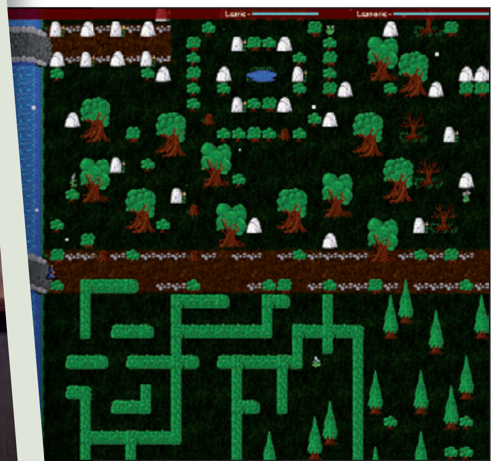
THREE WEEKS IN PARADISE

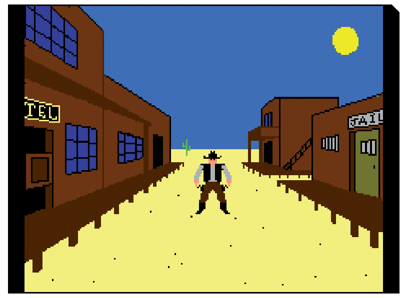
» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.SPECNG.ORG/DOWNLOADS/



We have a big love for anything Dave Perry, so to hear that one of our favourite Mr Perry games was getting a nice new spanking update courtesy of Team SpecNG was like having big breasted angels pour beer down our throats while they gently rub our backs so we don't get all gassy. Anyway, with that weird image in your head, we come to a great looking PC remake of Three Weeks in Paradise. If you've played the original Speccy classic (and there really should be no reason why you haven't) you'll feel right at home here. While the visuals have been spruced up nicely; given a sort of soft Chuck Rock tone to everything, the inventory-based puzzle action and the simple control interface remains very much in tact. Also the game has this wonderful dream-like aesthetic that makes the whole experience really easy on the brain - it's like venturing to your own piece of PC paradise. If we had just one criticism it would be that we wish getting hit by an enemy didn't take poor old Wally so long to recover, oh and it did take us a while to work out the key command to pick up objects. Anyway, aside from those small gripes, this is wonderfully presented homebrew effort we're sure Mr. Perry would approve of. This is a great remake, well done.









» **Above:** [PC] Matt's excellent remake of the Pickford brothers' *Feud*. » **Top Right:** [PC] Prepare for cowboy shenanigans in *The Wild Bunch*. » **Right:** [PC] And here's his wonderful mini version of Durell Software's Saboteur!

HOMEBREW HEROES

THIS MONTH WE FIND TIME TO SIT DOWN WITH RETRO REMAKES' FATSEAGAL, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS **MATT WHITE**. FIND OUT WHY HE HAS A SPECIAL LOVE FOR MINI REMAKES

Retro Gamer: When did you learn how to code?
Matt White: I started with type-ins on the Spectrum when I was about ten years old, which kicked off my interest, but it wasn't really until 8 years later, at university, that I would actually learn what I was doing. From there I got in to C, C++ and Java coding.

RG: What languages do you like to use?
MW: Java is my language of choice; it's what I use in my day job, so I have a fair bit of experience with it. The fact that the games can also be played on multiple platforms is also a huge plus.

RG: You tend to work more on remakes than new products. Why is that?
MW: When doing a remake, most of the legwork has been done for you so you don't have to worry about creating characters, story and maps from scratch. I tend to have a short attention span when it comes to writing games, so the quicker I can do it, the more likely it is that I'll complete it.

RG: Where did the idea for your 'Mini' games come from?
MW: I was looking at doing my *Saboteur* remake and came across a scan of a hand-drawn map that was published in the hints/cheats section of a Spectrum magazine. The map had been squeezed onto one page and I liked the scope and look of the characters so I decided to try and replicate it as a game. Miniaturising the game added a different dynamic to the original that I quite liked, so I decided to see if would work with other games that I enjoyed from the same era.

RG: How long did *Saboteur* and *Feud* take to complete?
MW: They both took roughly two months each to finish although, to be honest, there are still some updates I'd like to make to them now. My biggest hurdles are generally cosmetic ones as I'm rather rubbish at creating graphics and music – but thankfully there are some fine people out there in internet-land that are all too happy to help. The changes that miniaturisation can enforce upon the gameplay can also make it difficult. For example, the AI in *MiniFeud* had to be more sophisticated as you could see more of what the computer is doing. It took around three or four rewrites to get it working to a satisfactory level.

RG: Tell us about *Island Of Secrets*. It's based on an old Usborne type-in, right?
MW: That's correct, the book was called *Island Of Secrets* and contained the story and illustrations for a sprawling adventure game, as well as the program listing in BASIC. I tried to type it in when I was about ten, but it didn't work first time and I gave up. When I started looking into the retro scene a few years back the book came to mind and I thought it'd be interesting to adapt the basic program to Java so I could finally play it. This was the one game I probably made the biggest changes to, mostly because you really couldn't play it without referring to the book, which contained all the clues you need. I got rid of the text-parser and made it point-and-click, reworked some of the puzzles and object locations and added some more character dialogue that would tell you the information you would normally need the book for. All the graphics in the game are taken from scans of the illustrations in the book.

RG: Would you consider working in the industry full time ?
MW: I worked for a games company during my university year in industry and got to witness the football management game I worked on get dropped after a year of hard work, never to see the light of day. I did some work on a similar game for the Game Boy Color, which was released, but it was rushed and was very poor. These two experiences, plus the fact that I wasn't convinced I could cut the mustard in the ever-growing world of 3D games development, pushed me away from the full-time side of games programming.

RG: Why do you think the homebrew scene remains so popular?
MW: It shows that you don't need teams the size of a small country to create something playable, and I think that people can appreciate the effort that one or two people have put in to a game even if they're not fans of it. There's also a decent community out there that are willing to offer advice and encourage each other which

HIGH FIVE
The homebrew games Matt can't live without

1 Klass Of 99 (Richard Jordan): Small additions, such as school days actually ending, and the excellent cartoon graphics and sound make this a great update.

2 Ultimate Bruce Lee (Ovine By Design): The graphics may have been updated, but the playability of the original is intact and the wealth of bonus features improves the game's longevity.

3 Robocop 2D (Park Productions): It's on a par with the Spectrum version (which I loved) for playability and has excellent visuals and sound. Also, c'mon, it's *Robocop*.

4 Head Over Heels (Retrospec): Some of the best 2D graphics I've seen in a homebrew game. The love and respect for the original shines through.

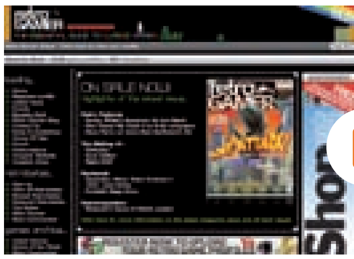
5 Chuckie Egg: The Next Batch (John Blyth): It was seeing this fantastic conversion that got me interested in updating *Chuckie Egg 2* and kicked off my foray into the remake world.

BARGAIN HUNT

DESPERATE TO FINISH OFF YOUR RETRO COLLECTION? WANT TO GET YOUR HANDS ON ALL THE BEST BARGAINS BUT DON'T KNOW WHERE TO GO? THEN VISIT **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET/BARGAIN_HUNT.PHP** AND DISCOVER ALL THE CLASSIC MACHINES THAT YOU'LL EVER NEED

You've been asking for it forever, but we're pleased to announce a brand new look for **Retro Gamer**'s Buyer's Guide section that makes it incredibly easy to get your hands on all the best retro bargains.

Using our new search engine couldn't be easier, as all you need to do is select a manufacturer and machine from the pull-down menu. Once you've found the system you're after, the magic of the internet will search eBay for the top 20 ending items, meaning that you'll be able to gauge the market's health with very little effort. This month, Darran's started buying games for his Sega Nomad.



Head on over to the excellent **www.retrogamer.net** and click on 'Bargain Hunt' or visit **www.retrogamer.net/bargain_hunt.php**



Put in the details for the greatest computer in the world and discuss with your staff writer why it's so much better than the ZX Spectrum.



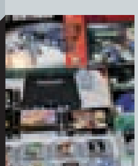
Swoon in delight as you find yourself getting ever closer to collecting all the £1.99 *Simulator* games that Codemasters ever released.

eBAY BARGAINS

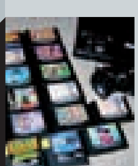
Retro Gamer has been scouring the world's most popular auction site, to find the best bargains out there…



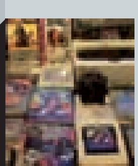
■ This *Pac-Man* arcade machine looked in great nick, which is why it probably won't stay at £26 for very long, with just a day to go.



■ At £26, plus postage, this awesome N64 bundle with 13 games, including *Pilotwings*, *Ocarina Of Time* and *GoldenEye*, offered hours of retro fun.



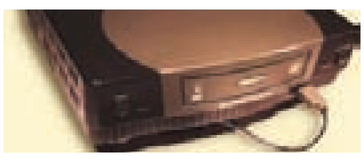
■ This Mega Drive bundle at a mere £10.50 was going for a steal. It came with two controllers and over 20 games, most of them classics.



■ This Game Gear lot came with a selection of great games, many of them boxed, and was fetching £26.99 with a few hours left on the clock.

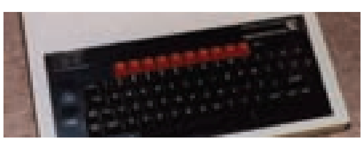
3DO

3DO GOLDSTAR	£45+ ($81+)
PANASONIC FZ-1 (FRONT LOADER)	£40+ ($74+)
PANASONIC FZ-10 (TOP LOADER)	£20+ ($37+)



ACORN

ARCHIMEDES	£30 ($55)
ATOM	£50 ($92)
ELECTRON	£10 ($18)
BBC MICRO	£15 ($28)



AMSTRAD

CPC 464	£10+ ($18+)
CPC 664	£90+ ($165+)
CPC 6128	£25+ ($46+)
GX4000	£50+ ($92+)

APPLE

APPLE II	£30+ ($55+)

ATARI

400/800/600XL/XE	£20+ ($37+)
2600 (VCS)	£20+ ($37+)
5200	£30 ($55)
7800	£20+ ($37+)
JAGUAR	£20+ ($37+)
JAGUAR CD	£70 ($129)
LYNX I/II	£20+ ($37+)
ST	£20+ ($37+)

BANDAI

GUNDAM RX-78	£75+ ($138+)
PLAYDIA	£90 ($166)
PIPPIN (ATMARK)	£500+ ($921+)
WONDERSWAN	£10 ($18)
WONDERSWAN COLOR	£20 ($37)
WONDERSWAN CRYSTAL	£25 ($46)



COMMODORE

AMIGA 500/600/1200	£20+ ($37+)
C16/PLUS/4	£15+ ($28+)
C64	£10+ ($18+)
C64 GS	£30+ ($55+)
C128	£30+ ($55+)
CDTV	£20 ($37)
CD32	£25 ($46)
VIC-20	£10+ ($18+)



FUJITSU

FUJITSU FM	£100+ ($184+)
FUJITSU FM TOWNS MARTY	£200+ ($368+)



MISCELLANEOUS

BALLY ASTROCADE	£20 ($37)
BARCODE BATTLER	£5 ($18)
CASIO LOOPY	£25 ($46)
FAIRCHILD CHANNEL F	£10 ($18)
COLECOVISION	£30 ($55)
DRAGON 32/64	£8 ($15)
ARCADIA 2001	£10 ($18)
EPOCH CASSETTE VISION	£20 ($37)
EPOCH SUPER CASSETTE VISION	£30 ($55)
INTELLIVISION	£40+ ($74+)
ODYSSEY	£10 ($18)
ORIC-1	£20 ($37)
PLAYSTATION	£10 ($18)
SAM COUPÉ	£50-£200 ($92-$368)
SUPERVISION	£15 ($28)
TIGER ELEC GAME.COM	£15 ($28)
TOMY TUTOR (MK1/JR/MK2)	£10 ($18)
VECTREX (MB/GCE)	£80 ($147)
X68000	£90+ ($166+)

MSX

MSX 1	£10+ ($18+)
MSX 2	£20+ ($37+)
MSX 2+	£30+ ($55+)
MSX TURBO R	£30+ ($55+)

NEC

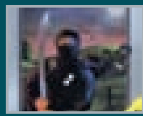
PC-6###	£10+ ($18+)

RETRO AUCTION WATCH

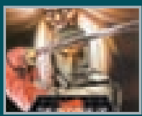
Retro Gamer sifts through the pages of eBay to report back on any items of interest, hardware or software, that caught our eyes. Since we've gone ninja crazy this month, we looked for some ninja games.



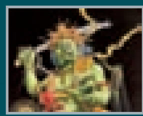
SHINOBI
System: **SMS**
Normally sells for **£4**
Ended at **£8**



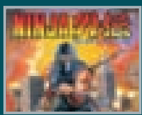
NINJA GOLF
System: **Atari 7800**
Normally sells for **£25**
Ended at **£38**



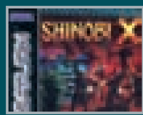
THE REVENGE OF SHINOBI
System: **Mega Drive**
Normally sells for **£3**
Ended at **£4.20**



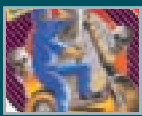
NINJA SPIRIT
System: **C64**
Normally sells for **£2**
Ended at **58p**



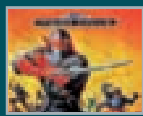
NINJA GAIDEN
System: **NES**
Normally sells for **£4**
Ended at **£2.67**



SHINOBI X
System: **Saturn**
Normally sells for **£20**
Ended at **£14**



NINJA SCOOTER SIMULATOR
System: **CPC**
Normally sells for **£1**
Ended at **£2**



SHINOBI III: RETURN OF THE NINJA MASTER
System: **Mega Drive**
Normally sells for **£5**
Ended at **£XX**

PC-8801	**£20 ($37)**
PC-9801	**£35 ($65)**
PC-FX	**£50 ($92)**
PC-ENGINE	**£55 ($101)**
PC-ENGINE GT	**£70+ ($129+)**
TURBOGRAFX-16	**£30 ($55)**
TURBO EXPRESS	**£50 ($92)**
SUPERGRAFX	**£80 ($147)**
PC-E CD-ROM/ TURBOGRAFX CD	**£50+ ($92+)**
PC-E DUO/ TURBO DUO	**£120 ($221)**
DUO-R	**£80 ($147)**

NINTENDO

FAMICOM	**£60 ($111)**
FAMICOM AV	**£40 ($74)**
FAMICOM DISK SYSTEM	**£70 ($129)**
SHARP FAMICOM TWIN	**£100 ($184)**
GAME & WATCH	**£1+ ($2+)**
GAME BOY B/W	**£5 ($9)**
GAME BOY POCKET	**£8 ($15)**
GAME BOY COLOR	**£12 ($22)**
GAME BOY ADVANCE	**£25 ($46)**
N64	**£10 ($18)**
N64 DD	**£150+ ($276+)**
NES (TOASTER)	**£15 ($28)**
NES (DOG BONE)	**£50 ($92)**
SNES (SUPER FAMICOM IN JAPAN)	**£20 ($37)**
SNES 2 (KNOWN AS 'JR' IN JAPAN)	**£50+ ($92+)**
VIRTUAL BOY	**£80 ($147)**



PHILIPS

CD-I	**£20+ ($37+)**
CD-I 450/500	**£30 ($55)**
VIDEOPAC G7000	**£10 ($18)**
VIDEOPAC G7400	**£20 ($37)**

SEGA

32X	**£35 ($65)**
DREAMCAST	**£25 ($46)**
GAME GEAR	**£15 ($28)**
SG-1000	**£50-£150 ($80-$260)**
SC-3000	**£50 ($92)**
MASTER SYSTEM I/II	**£10 ($18)**



AMSTRAD MEGA PC	**£10 ($18)**
TERADRIVE	**£100 ($184)**
MEGA DRIVE/ GENESIS I/II	**£25 ($46)**
GENESIS 3	**£35 ($65)**
NOMAD	**£100 ($184)**
MULTIMEGA/ WONDERMEGA/ CDX/X'EYE	**£100+ ($184+)**
MEGA-CD (SCD) I/II	**£50+ ($92+)**
PICO	**£20 ($37)**
SATURN	**£30 ($55)**
MEGA CD (SCD) I/II	**£50+ ($92+)**

SINCLAIR

ZX80	**£200 ($368)**
ZX81	**£70 ($129)**
ZX SPECTRUM 48K	**£10 ($18)**
ZX SPECTRUM 128K	**£40 ($74)**
ZX SPECTRUM+	**£35 ($65)**
ZX SPECTRUM +2	**£35 ($65)**
ZX SPECTRUM +3	**£40 ($74)**

SNK

NEO-GEO AES	**£150+ ($276+)**
NEO-GEO MVS	**£70 ($129)**
NEO-GEO CD	**£100 ($184)**
NEO-GEO CDZ	**£80+ ($147+)**
NEO-GEO POCKET	**£20 ($37)**
NEO-GEO POCKET COLOR	**£35 ($65)**

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

THIS ISSUE WE SPEAK TO SHAWN BROWN WHO, AFTER OUR MEGA DRIVE FEATURE IN ISSUE 62, WANTED TO SHOW US HIS IMPRESSIVE COLLECTION OF SEGA STUFF



» My name is Shawn Brown. I'm 24, work in security, and live in Brisbane, Australia. I have a growing Sega collection.



» This is all my Mega Drive Games and this is really where my collection began. I can't remember which was my first one, but it was most likely *Rock N' Roll Racing*. More recently, though, I purchased *Phantasy Star 2, 3* and *4*.



» Here is all my Saturn, Mega-CD, Game Gear games. I can't say the Mega-CD has the greatest line up of games, but I've spent a long time playing *Double Switch*.



» These are all my boxed consoles. You might notice that most of them are Mega Drive related. Well, that's because I like to have spares for when one breaks. I've have been through three!



» This is my game pad and many days are spent down here. I've also set up a nice lounge area with several fans because Queensland is so freaking hot!



If you have a collection that you feel the rest of the **Retro Gamer** readership needs to know about, then contact us at **retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk** and we'll do our best to get you in the magazine.

MAILBAG

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET**



» [PC] *X3: Reunion* is one of the *X* series of games created by German developer Egosoft.

TRIPLE X ACTION

Dear **Retro Gamer**,
I've been with you since issue 4, and love the mag, especially when you look at the early Nineties 16-bit stuff. My favourite games of all time are *Lords Of Midnight* and *Elite*, amongst others, all of which you have covered in **Retro Gamer**. The reason I'm writing to you is that there is only one game that you haven't covered, so that I would dearly love you'd take a look at *X: Beyond The Frontier*. Sadly, the *X* series of games doesn't get the press coverage it deserves. I think it would be fitting as the game is about to reach its tenth anniversary.

I think you will find Egosoft to be a very interesting bunch, with a few members of their team having been recruited from the Egosoft's forums (even though some had no programming experience). I would be absolutely delighted if Egosoft got the **Retro Gamer** treatment, since I feel that only you could do their games justice.

Noel Saunderson

We're always happy to take suggestions and request for future articles in Retro Gamer, Noel. A look back at the *X* series is certainly something we could consider. We'll get our crack team of freelancers on the case and see what we can do for you.

DUG DIG

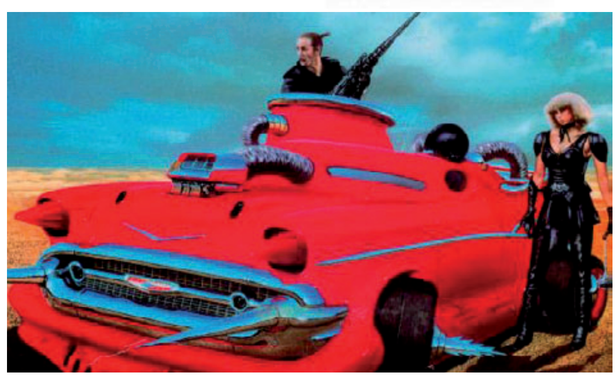
Dear **Retro Gamer**,
I've been a subscriber of your great magazine since about issue 32 and the only thing I think is missing, so to speak, is some sort of retro award system. I know your articles are great at reviving many a lost hour playing *Sensible Soccer*, *Xenon 2* or *Street Fighter II*, but I was just thinking that your magazine would also be a great platform for acknowledging those titles that never really got the recognition they deserved when they were released.

Personally I'd like to give such an award to the guys behind *Nitro* as this game was probably the reason I only got a 'C' in my Welsh language GCSE at the time, and yet it was largely ignored when it was released.

Anyway, keep up the good work.

Ched, via email

While we really like your idea to introduce a retro award system into the magazine, Ched, we do feel that the plucking of forgotten or underplayed classics from obscurity is something that we cover in features Why You Must Play and Import



» Ched would like to give *Nitro* a special retro award, while Darran would like to point out that the artwork was also used on Fighting Fantasy book, *Freeway Fighter*.

STAR LETTER

TOP GEAR

Dear **Retro Gamer**,
I felt I had to write in and show my appreciation for this wonderful, unique effort that is **Retro Gamer**. It's outstanding!

Since the release of the PlayStation, I started gathering as many magazines of 8- and 16-bit platforms as I could, and I knew someone, someday would come up with a genuine, good old-fashioned games magazine.

I only started reading **Retro Gamer** since load 53 when it was given to me as a present for my birthday. Since then, I can't afford missing an issue. I read it religiously from front to back. Your writing is pure love, knowledge and dedication, reminding me of the thrills of *Crash*, *Zzap!64*, *C&VG*, *Super Play*, *Game Pro* and how they delivered a real sense of emotion when playing games. Here in Portugal I believe the Spectrum ruled the Eighties and Sega the Nineties and there's a strong appetite for anything retro; one of my friends owns over 500 original boxed Mega Drive games. I really enjoy reading Retro Shamer, Collectors Corner, Retrorevivals, End/Game and your unique interviews with legendary game producers. **Retro Gamer** is giving tons of much needed love to gamers everywhere, and doing what no other publication does. It's absolutely fantastic.

Andre Neves
Condesso, Portugal.

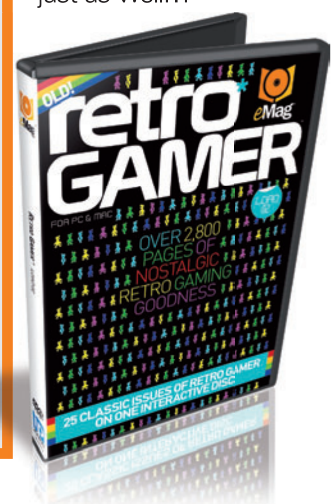


» Andre gets on his bike to enjoy the Christmas issue in the sunshine.

Talk about a charm offensive. Thanks for that heart-warming letter and the various pictures you sent of you posing on your motorbike. Anyway, here's a copy of our latest e-Mag (although we suspect you already own it). Cheers for getting in touch, it's always great to hear from some of our overseas readers. We're pleased to hear that you enjoy Retro Gamer; it makes all those late nights and early mornings seem worth it. By the way, is it just us or does anyone else think seeing Andre dip into our Christmas issue while basking in the glorious Portuguese sunshine looks a little odd?

WIN!

Every month, one lucky reader will receive a copy of our brand new eMag, **Retro Gamer Load 2**, a bargain if ever there was one. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls. Failing that, something funny with swear words or something *Strider*-related will go down just as well…





CONTACT US

Snail Mail: Retro Gamer, Imagine Publishing, Richmond House, 33 Richmond Hill, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH2 6EZ

Email: retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Next month: The Oliver Twins



BURNING QUESTION?

HAVE YOU ever had a burning question that you've always wanted to ask? Do you often sit at your computer desk wondering if David Braben will ever patch things up with Ian Bell, or if Matthew Smith checks into hotels as Miner Willy? If you do, then head on over to our forum where you can put your burning questions to whoever we're interviewing. The best questions will then get answered and revealed in the next issue. Visit the forum now at www.retrogamer.net/forum



[Arcade] Nick wants to know where he can find the best home conversion of *Power Drift*; our advice is to get the import Saturn version.

Only. However; if you feel that strongly about *Nitro* you could always write a profile for it for the Retro Gamer website. You never know, it may even end up getting into the mag.

RETRO REVOLUTION

Dear Retro Gamer,

I'm writing from down-under Australia, where kangaroos use koalas to wipe their asses. Retro Gamer has started a retro revolution, with older gamers buying the games they cherished as kids. Your magazine always sells out quickly down here. I now see other retro people coming out from hiding; the world will never be the same again. We come from all walks of life, treading the earth under our sandalled feet. They will look at us and stare but nothing can stop the retro gamer, with black rings under our eyes after hours of gameplay and hands built of iron due to the long hours of play. No, we will walk the earth and they shall shudder, no one will stop us this time. Okay, sorry about that, I got a bit carried away. Seriously though, thanks for the great memories you have brought back. I read your magazine from front to back, I love it. Can you please do a special on the Sega Master System? Also, what's the best way to get a good version of *Power Drift* without purchasing the expensive arcade machine?

Nick Moudios

G'day Nick, it's great to hear that Retro Gamer is received so well down under. We tuned into BBC News 24 this morning, but weirdly we found no coverage of the retro uprising you mention on our telly box. Anyway, with regard to your *Power Drift* question, we recommend you pick yourself up the Sega Ages edition of *Power Drift* for the Sega Saturn – your machine will need to be able to run import games, as it was only released in Japan.

> "I now see other retro people coming out from hiding; the world will never be the same"

RETROBATE PROFILE

Retrobate Profile



Name:	Anthony Staude
Joined:	5th Feb 2009
Location:	Melbourne, Australia
Occupation:	Programmer
Website:	http://users.bigpond.net.au/mame/gp32/
Fav Games System:	NEC PC Engine, Sega Master System, Atari 800, Macintosh B&W 68K, MSX, Arcade
Bio:	I do some MAME programming for the GP32, GP2X and soon Pandora.

DREAM COME TRUE

Dear Retro Gamer,

After dreaming about a magazine dedicated to retro gaming, I was thrilled when I encountered Retro Gamer magazine in a Swedish newspaper shop. This is an amazing magazine giving me hours of nostalgia.

The reason for me writing to you is that I have some ideas for some interesting articles. >>

BEAT THE TEAM

Think you're good at retro games? Then see if you can beat the staff at some of their favourite games



DARRAN

CHOSEN GAME: RAINBOW ISLANDS

Why I picked it: It makes me feel all happy inside. **Handy advice:** Gems appear in specific parts of the screen so manipulate where an enemy falls to get all seven.



High-Score: 348,210

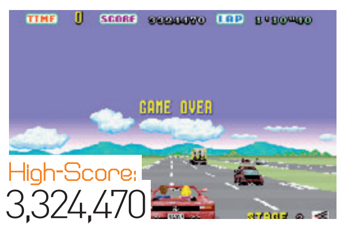


STUART

CHOSEN GAME: OUT RUN

Why I picked it: Because I simply can't wait to play *OutRun Online* on Xbox Live Arcade.

Handy advice: Don't crash – and if you do, make sure it's not one a nasty one!



High-Score: 3,324,470



CRAIG

CHOSEN GAME: WIZBALL (C64)

Why I picked it: Because back in the day, I used to be able to get 999,999.

Handy Advice: Move slowly, picking off individual targets, and get permanent movement upgrades as soon as possible.



High-Score: 736,450

From the forum

» To have your say visit www.retrogamer.net/forum

Every month, **Retro Gamer** asks a question on the forum and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know...

What's your favourite first-person shooter?

ID pforson
Blood, by Monolith. What other game gives you an aerosol can and a lighter as a weapon? Fantastic game.

woody.cool
Doom... the original version on the PC. Without a doubt, Doom introduced me to the world of FPS. Something about the rawness, the look and feel and the playability keeps bringing me back to the original game, not to mention the choice of weapons (chainsaw anyone?). Okay... I know the graphics are blocky, and it has a cheesy MIDI tune, but that's also part of the fun for me, bringing back all those memories of why I actually envied PC owners at the time (I was still firmly in the Amiga camp). Long live *Doom*.

Smurph
Exhumed. Those that have played it will tell you how much it jumps up and down on *Doom*. Ooooh, controversial! True though.

jdanddiet
I was gonna say *Half-Life*, but to be honest the last quarter of the game, which is essentially *Manic Miner* in space, kinda ruined it for me. So instead I'll plump for *Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault* on the PC, which I found an enthralling experience.

gmintyfresh
Hexen – I love *Doom* but I really enjoy the shift in focus towards puzzling that *Hexen* employs. *Hexen* still on occasion has waves of bad guys to mow down so it has the best of both worlds.

markopoloman
Aliens Vs Predator 2 on the PC. Fantastic, atmospheric and even better than what was a brilliant first game!

Sputryk
Doom 2. First FPS played is usually always remembered as the best, and even now this still has me running for cover. Full of atmosphere and even large, open levels give a feeling of claustrophobia which is lost in the 'slicker' looking varieties of FPS. It has its faults, but nothing is perfect.

Dunjohn
There've been a few that I've played to death, but I'm gonna be a scrub and say *Halo*. Seeing two players split up and trap that Elite in a pincer in that demo video convinced me that THIS is where I enter the next console generation.

JetSetWilly
If I had to choose just the one, *Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault* on the PC. It was tough, but forgiving. It had a cracking mission structure and the graphics still look great to this day. If I had to choose two, this would be one and the other would be *Blood*. Bags of humour plus fun weapons as well.

StickHead
The first FPS I ever played: *Zero Tolerance* on the Mega Drive. That game really scared me silly. The fact that you couldn't see more than 5 feet in front of your face had me edging into rooms so slowly, terrified of what might be ahead. I realise that it was *Doom*'s poorer cousin and many of its PC contemporaries are considered more technically accomplished, but this was the very moment I realised how immersive a game could be when viewed from your avatar's skull.

lexiomiguel
Call Of Duty! It was the game that introduced me to the genre. I'm still not a huge fan of shooters but I'm a huge fan of this game! The cinematic style just blew me away!

paranoid marvin
Does *3D Deathchase* count? If not, then *Tron 2.0*, which is vastly underrated. Not only is it a continuation of the story line from the superb film, it features one of the best weapons too – the iconic disc... oh, and the Lightcycles!

Sir Arthur
For me this is a tough one as *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* on the original Xbox was my first Xbox Live shooter and I loved it, I also spent way to much time on *Rainbow Six* too. I would have to say that *Rainbow Six* on the Xbox is my favourite last-gen first-person shooter, with *Fallout 3* (can I have this?) and *Call Of Duty: World At War* on the 360 being my fave current-gen.

psj3809
Many great ones, but it has to be *Duke Nukem 3D*. Funny as anything, some great level design, and brings back a lot of good memories from the mid-Nineties.

WildWillyWilson
Half-Life 2 – for sheer immersion it can't be beaten, the way the story is integrated into the game is superb. It really has got a unique atmosphere. It's quite eerie with G man popping up in the corner of the screen and sloping off every now and then.

YOUR OPINION PLEASE!

ANNOYING IN FILMS

Bonerlaw I hate it when there is a climactic ending to a movie that involves the countdown of a self-destruct device etc. I'm really pedantic I know, but when the robotic female voice says "five minutes to evacuation", why does it then take another ten feckin' minutes for the base to explode eh? Why?

BennyTheGreek Car crashes where people get out, rub their head and continue... if it was real life their internal organs would smash into their rib cage and their eyes would pop out.

mohicankid Poor continuity! The best example I've noticed to date is in *Rocky Balboa*. He's coming back to fight a guy half his age and they are talking about how to train him and all the physical limitations he has in his way, but not one mention of the life-threatening brain trauma that pushed him into retirement during *Rocky V*.

RetroAerosmith People who fall off high buildings or cliffs and manage to hold on or pull themselves up by their fingertips – amazing upper body strength.

BULLET HELL

Tepid Snake I'm a fan of bullet hell – playing through them makes you feel like you can beat anything. The power-up icons rarely matter, as long as you can keep up with what's on screen.

Sigma Yes but I like to have infinite continues. *Ikaruga* is a great game but I'd like to be able to complete it. As it is I'm lucky to get to the end of stage 3.

TwoHeadedBoy Love'm to bits I do, especially *DoDonPachi*. What I really like about them though is the smug feeling you get when you think people are watching you play.

C=Style *Battle Garegga*, *Soukyugurentai* and *Dimahoo*. These are the three best shmups I've ever played and not classed as bullet hell. Anyone who is not a fan of the Cave-style shmups should check these out.

paranoid marvin Personally I feel that bullet hell shooters are more for the benefit of the spectator than the player.

FLICKY

jb1014 Every Mega Drive compilation has it. It is quite possibly one of the worst games ever. I am honestly interested to know if anyone actually likes it. I'm not even going to get started on the box art.

Rinoa I actually really like it. It's super cute and very addictive. I used to play it on the PSP quite a lot when I used to travel down to Stafford on the train.

C=Style Never really understood what was good about *Flicky* either, I've always ignored it.

bonerlaw *Flicky* is addictive as anything! I couldn't put it down on the Mega Drive collection.

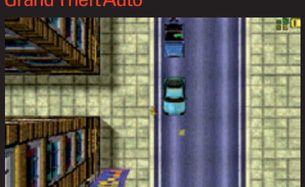
SexyWayne Pure and honest 'one more go' gaming at its best.

video-gamer-girl I love *Flicky*. It's the simplicity that I like in this old classic. Also when I see this game it reminds me of *Mappy*.

Old vs NEW

Each month we'll be finding out if the classics are better than their successors. This month, which *GTA* game is the best?

Grand Theft Auto



Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars



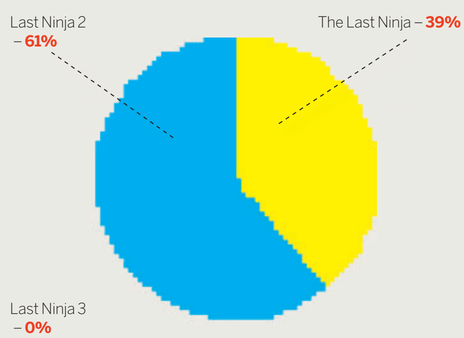
75% | 25%

Bub&Bob "PSone original works a treat on my PSP"

Spooky "*GTA: Chinatown Wars* is great"

HOT TOPIC

What's the best Last Ninja Game?



"It would have to be the first one. I was blown away at the time by the graphics, control and gameplay. And weapons! Ninja stars, nunchuks, it had everything!" **– drewbar**

"*Last Ninja 2* refines everything to near perfection, bar that one item you had to take with you to the last level else you couldn't complete the game." **– TheDude18**

CONTACT US

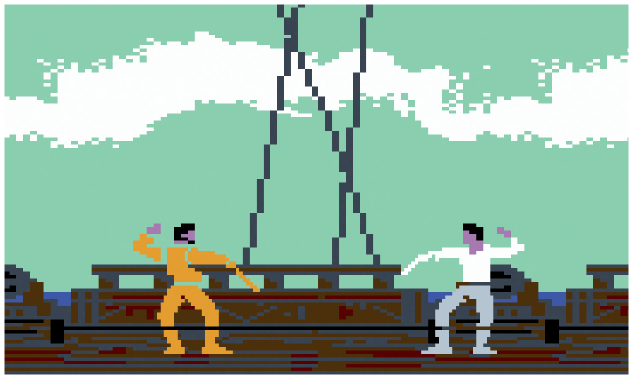
Snail Mail: Retro Gamer, Imagine Publishing, Richmond House, 33 Richmond Hill, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH2 6EZ **Email:** retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Please forgive me if this has already been covered: how about a look back at companies still trading in 8- and 16-bit hardware? Raymond Computer is a great (possibly only?) example I can think of. It's a physical full-service computer store specialising in sales and service of both the Commodore and Amiga computers.

Also, how about an article on demo parties, and speaking with game crackers and celebrities? Best regards.

Kristoffer Jälén

One of the things that we're looking to introduce more of in Retro Gamer is one-off stand-alone features to add more variety into the magazine – be it looking at in-game advertising, a celebratory glance at a game console, or maybe even uncovering companies, like the one you mention in your letter, who are helping to keep retro gaming alive. We've also been considering writing a feature about the hackers and pirate scene for a while, but getting lawbreakers to walk the plank is proving to be a difficult. It's an ongoing idea we have swimming around inside our heads, so watch this space.



Kristoffer wants us to speak with some pirates; we contacted Johnny Depp's agent to request a chat.

TWO CAN PLAY THAT GAME

Dear Stuart,

I'm from Portugal and although I'm only 17, I'm a huge retro gaming fan. I owned a PlayStation when I was younger but I was far more interested in Mega Drive and SNES games, and eventually I started playing everything from old NES games to newer N64 games. I also started to play Dreamcast games, a lot, so I want to thank you for the great Dreamcast article in issue 50, as it's my favourite game system of all time.

I sent you this letter to talk to you about two-player games: whatever happened to them? I usually prefer playing *Gunstar Heroes* with a friend of mine because the games that come out nowadays don't even seem to have a two-player mode! It seems the priority is always online modes now.

My friend wanted to buy *Killzone 2* for PS3 but has decided against it now because it doesn't have a two-player mode, only online play. And here's me thinking that console games were supposed to be played with friends.

João Pontes

An interesting point, João, but we suspect the industry has just been reacting to the needs and wants of gamers. Were it not for the huge popularity of online deathmatches, pioneered by games like *Doom* and *Quake III Arena*, multiplayer gaming would probably look a lot different today. Other factors include the popularity of more cinematic games (such as *Resident Evil* and *Tomb Raider*), which wouldn't work as well in two-player mode (in the case of *Resident Evil 5*, the co-op element really comes to harm the game's sense of terror). There are still plenty of multiplayer games out there that can be enjoyed with mates without having an internet connection, such as *FIFA 09*, *Street Fighter IV*, *Tiger Woods 09*, the *Call Of Duty* games, and lest we forget *Legends Of Wrestling*.

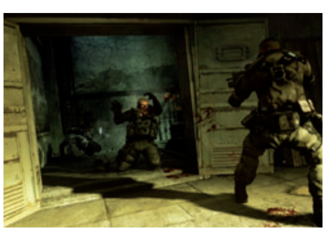
DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

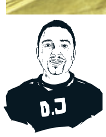
Twitter

This month we've been discussing Darran's unnatural obsession with Twittering. Having now acquired 100 followers (visit http://twitter.com/retrogamer_daz), he is now resorting to bashing out status updates every ten minutes. Darran is a huge fan of Twitter, while Stuart thinks it's just another internet fad that will come to die out quicker than the celebrity of that *X Factor* winner last year whose name no one can remember. Anyway, that's what we've been discussing this issue. Darran's no doubt mentioned this on Twitter already.

> "The games that come out nowadays don't even seem to have a two-player mode!"

CURRENTLY PLAYING

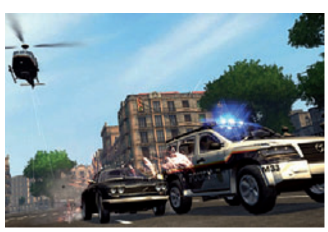




DARRAN

Killzone 2

I'm not usually a big fan of online shooters, but recently I've found myself hopelessly addicted to this stunning-looking game. I've just unlocked the shotgun, so don't get too close to me!





STUART

The Wheelman

As you probably know by now, I have a real fascination for action games, so this month I've been mostly playing *The Wheelman*. It's like *Chase HQ* but starring Ross Kemp (it's Vin Diesel, you twit – Ed).





CRAIG

Eliss

Although not a retro remake or sequel, Steph Thirion's *Eliss* channels games of old with its stylish graphics, delicate audio and challenging difficulty curve, while also offering modern multi-touch gameplay.

retro GAMER

Imagine Publishing Ltd
Richmond House 33 Richmond Hill
Bournemouth Dorset BH2 6EZ
☎ +44 (0) 1202 586200
Web: www.imagine-publishing.co.uk
www.retrogamer.net

Magazine team

Editor Darran Jones
retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk
☎ 01202 586237

Editor in Chief Nick Jones
Senior Designer Stephen Williams
Staff Writer Stuart Hunt
Senior Sub Editor Sarah Slee
Senior Art Editor Greg Whitaker
Head of Design Ross Andrews

Contributors
Carly Barrett, Richard Burton, Stuart Campbell, Ashley Day, Paul Davies, Paul Drury, Craig Grannell, Richard Hewison, Jason Kelk, Iain Lee, Damien McFerran, Kim Wild

Cover
System 3

Advertising
Digital or printed media packs are available on request
Commercial Director Ross Webster
☎ 01202 586418
ross.webster@imagine-publishing.co.uk
Head of Sales James Hanslip
☎ 01202 586423
james.hanslip@imagine-publishing.co.uk
Advertising Manager James Haley
☎ 01202 586432
james.haley@imagine-publishing.co.uk
Advertising Sales Executive Ben Taylor
☎ 01202 586439
ben.taylor@imagine-publishing.co.uk
Classified Sales Executive Kriss Scott
☎ 01202 586420
kriss.scott@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Salesperson of the Year
JAMES HALEY

International
Retro Gamer is available for licensing. Contact the International department to discuss partnership opportunities.
International Manager Cathy Blackman
☎ +44 (0) 1202 586401
licensing@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Subscriptions
Subscriptions Manager Lucy Nash
☎ 01202 586443
lucy.nash@imagine-publishing.co.uk
To order a subscription to **Retro Gamer**
☎ (UK) 0844 848 8412
☎ (Overseas) +44 (0)1795 592872
Email: retrogamer@servicehelpline.co.uk
13 issue subscription (UK) – £51.90
13 issue subscription (Europe) – £70
13 issue subscription (ROW) – £80

Circulation
Circulation & Export Manager Darren Pearce
☎ 01202 586200

Production
Production Director Jane Hawkins
☎ 01202 586200

Founders
Managing Director Damian Butt
Finance Director Steven Boyd
Creative Director Mark Kendrick

Printing & Distribution
Printed by St Ives Andover, West Portway, Andover, SP10 3SF

Distributed by Seymour Distribution, 2 East Poultry Avenue, London, EC1A 9PT ☎ 0207 429 4000

ISSN 1742-3155

retro GAMER

LOAD 65

NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE 18 JUNE 2009

ACHTUNG!

We take a look at the creation of the world's first ever first-person shooter and the impact it's had on gamers and developers



OTHER GREAT FEATURES

» It was hugely popular as an education tool for school users everywhere, but that wasn't to say that the Acorn Archimedes didn't have some great games available for it

» In an exclusive new interview we speak to the creators of *Super Metroid* and discover just how difficult it was to create Samus's greatest 2D adventure

» *Castle Of Illusion* is widely considered to be one of the greatest Disney platformers of all time. In a new community feature, Retro Gamer readers explain what makes it so special

RETRO DIRECTORY

EVERY MONTH, RETRO GAMER WILL BE LISTING ITS FAVOURITE WEBSITES AND INTERVIEWING SOME OF THEIR KEY MEMBERS. THIS MONTH WE SPEAK TO MARK KIDLEY, OWNER OF THE AWESOME RADIOSEGA AND ARCHIVER OF SOME OF THE BEST VIDEOGAME TUNES OF ALL TIME

THE RETRO GAMER DIRECTORY

ATARI AGE
www.atariage.com
Excellent site dedicated to all aspects of Atari gaming.

ATARI ORG
www.atari.org
Another Atari site with every machine since the 2600.

AUSSIE ARCADE
www.aussiearcade.com.au
A fantastic arcade forum catering for an Aussie audience.

CPC ZONE
www.cpczone.net
Great site for the Amstrad range of computers.

C64 GAME ENDINGS
www.c64endings.co.uk
Over 260 endings for classic and not so classic C64 games.

LEMON64
www.lemon64.com
Superb Commodore 64 site filled with insightful reviews and a friendly forum.

LEMON AMIGA
www.lemonamiga.com
This great Amiga site is run by Kim Lemon, owner of Lemon 64.

MACRETRO
www.macretro.tk
Getting emulators up and running on the Mac, this is a brilliant site.

NEO-GEO.COM
www.neo-geo.com
Dedicated to SNK's systems, but with lots of other stuff to enjoy.

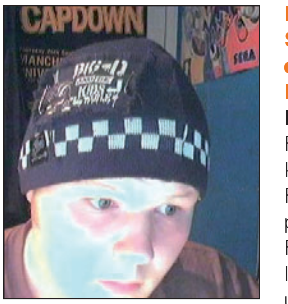
WEEKEND GAMER
www.weekend-gamer.co.uk
Great site that covers a range of topics, from TV to gaming.

SYSTEM16
www.system16.com
Sega focused, but also covers arcade games.

GAMES THAT WEREN'T
http://gtw64.retro-net.de
Where cancelled C64 games get discovered.

NTSC-UK
www.ntsc-uk.com
This site is devoted to imports, but there's a retro section, too.

OLD-COMPUTERS.COM
www.old-computers.com
If you think the 2600 is ancient, visit this fascinating site.



Retro Gamer: So Mark, when did you set up Radio Sega?
Mark Kidley: RadioSEGA was first known as MySEGA Radio, which I put online around February 2006, as a little experiment. It used Shoutcast and I hosted a few listener slots from my PC, with a play-list of around 100 Sega tracks.

A month later I renamed the site RadioSEGA, built a dedicated site and invested some money into it. It sort of took off from there. I'm really happy with how the site has evolved over the past three years, with requests, forums and over 6,500 tracks enjoyed by thousands around the globe.

RG: Why base it on Sega music instead of other companies?
MK: I'm a bit of a Sega fanboy really! I had a Mega Drive and a Dreamcast when I was growing up (I sadly missed out on the Saturn), and I've always thought Sega soundtracks are by far the best. *Out Run*, *Jet Set Radio* and *Daytona USA* are perfect examples on why no one comes close to Sega when it comes to creating brilliant soundtracks!

RG: Ah, but what gives you the edge over similar websites?
MK: The requests system is probably the biggest thing we have over any similar sites. The sheer size of our selection of music, which is over 6,500 tracks and counting, is also a huge advantage. I definitely have to thank my play-list managers (SoundReaper, Dr Shaneman and Sherlock) for helping with that one. We also put out the stream at 128K stereo so it's near CD quality, something a lot of other sites don't actually do. Soon I'll be adding loads of new features to the site such as a Blog, RadioSEGA Mobile and live shows over the coming months to make the site even more popular and enjoyable.

RG: So what's the most popular part of the site?
MK: The requests section is definitely the most popular part of the site. We get hundreds of requests per day, which normally play quite soon (unless it's really busy!), so that keeps people coming back all the time. People are pretty spoilt for choice there, with a host of really great music to choose from.

RG: How can our readers contribute?
MK: In many ways, with the forum being the most obvious. Our community is always growing and improving. Simply listening to RadioSEGA, making requests and telling your mates about us is definitely the best way to contribute. In the future, when the Top 40 show begins, all those requests will be counted up every week to create a great chart show, so keep an eye out for that! It's going to be really special.

RG: Any plans to make something along the lines of Radio Nintendo?
MK: Bah, of course not! But honestly, RadioSEGA is a huge project on its own and I don't think I would have the time to start up another site. It's also not cheap at all to run these kinds of sites.

RG: Finally, what's your favourite Sega song and why?
MK: A very difficult choice, but I'd probably have to say *Conditioned Reflex* from *Sega Rally Championship 1995*. It's one of those rocking tunes that's perfect for throwing a Lancia Delta around a track, trying to get that elusive new record time. One I always request when listening to RadioSEGA.

> "WE GET HUNDREDS OF REQUESTS PER DAY… PEOPLE ARE PRETTY SPOILT FOR CHOICE THERE"

DEEPER LOOK – WEBSITE OF THE MONTH

RadioSEGA
http://www.radiosega.net/



Mark Kidley is one of our heroes. He has created the greatest Sega resource site that we've ever encountered, which boasts over 6,500 different tracks to listen to. Everything from *Out Run*'s *Magical Sound Shower* to *2 Spicy*'s *Back To Hong Kong* is covered, meaning that you're liable to always find something new to listen to. Eagle-eyed readers will no doubt remember that we've covered Mark's site in the past, but it's had such a massive transformation over the past year that we really wanted to make more people aware of it. If you're a fan of Sega, or just love great tunes, then this is a site you definitely want in your favourites.

RETRO MUSEUM
www.retrocomputermuseum.co.uk
This site will soon be an actual physical place you can visit.

RACKET BOY
www.racketboy.com
There's a definite Sega slant to Racket Boy, but it's a lot of fun.

RADIO SEGA
www.radiosega.net
If you're a fan of Sega music you'll love Radio Sega.

SEGA-16.COM
www.sega-16.com
Mega Drive site with some incredibly in-depth interviews.

RETRO 101
http://retro101.co.uk
It's fairly new, but Retro 101 has some informative articles.

RETRO GAMING RADIO
www.monroeworld.com
Superb monthly podcast that looks at the US game market.

RLLMUK FORUM
www.rllmukforum.com
All the latest games and a retro section with helpful members.

THE RUBBER BEERMAT
www.therubberbeermat.co.uk
Excellent Spectrum site that champions a lot of rare games.

SCOTTISH AMIGA USER GROUP
http://scottishamiga.webs.com
Newly formed site for Scottish Amiga fans.

SHOOT THE CORE
http://shootthecore.moonpod.com
This brilliant site loves shmups of all descriptions.

SHMUPS
www.shmups.com
Amazing website dedicated to the shoot-'em-up genre.

VIDEOGAME MUSEUM
www.vgmuseum.com
Screenshots, game endings, cover scans, and reviews.

THE VIRTUAL CONSOLE ARCHIVE
www.vc-reviews.com
Everything VC-related.

WORLD OF SPECTRUM
www.worldofspectrum.org
Superb Spectrum site that offers a friendly forum.

GAMESTYLE
www.gamestyle.net
Long-standing website that now includes retro articles.

If you want to add your website to our expanding directory, please contact Darran at **darran.jones@imagine-publishing.co.uk**

END/GAME



JOE & MAC: CAVEMAN NINJA

Prehistoric ninjas Joe & Mac are on a mission to save some damsels in distress, but having beaten their way to the last level and tussled with a weird cave-lizard-man inside the stomach of a giant red T-Rex, our two heroes discover that one of their damsels could have a love for apples… of the Adam's variety.



SCREEN 1
With the green lizard beast beaten to a pulp, Joe (or is that Mac?) is free to exit the dinosaur via three routes: anus number 1, anus number 2 or anus number 3. Pick yours carefully, though, as each awards you a different ending.



SCREEN 2
Having exited the dinosaur our two heroes are pleased with themselves. We recommend they grab themselves a beer and a wash. Internal organs and exit passages aside, after all that fighting they must be parched and sweaty.



SCREEN 3
There's something not quite right here. Ah, we got it, this women is clearly wearing make-up. Data East should really have done their research… cosmetics weren't invented until the 20th century. Never mind, chaps.



SCREEN 4
What could be making our two heroes look like they've just had a vision of the ice age? It probably has something to do with their women; maybe they've all been mutilated by raptors, or sucked to death by brachiosaurs?



SCREEN 5
Ever the gentlemen, Joe & Mac shoot down the obvious advances from their fair maiden – very chivalrous of you both. In fact, had we prehistoric ninja sisters, we'd be happy to hire them out to you on a week by week basis.